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ABSTRACT

A study examined the effectiveness of the Westport Business Technology Magnet High School (WHS) in Kansas City, Missouri, after its third year of operation. Data for the summative evaluation were obtained from the following: classroom observations/site visits; interviews, dialogues, and surveys of WHS teachers, students, and parents; and the school district's offices. The evaluation established that the magnet school approach had resulted in only negligible progress toward desegregation. Teachers cited staff commitment and opportunities for students as the major strengths of the WHS program; however, most teachers expressed major concerns with regard to the following: communication among staff and administrators; structure of the curriculum and its success in preparing students for business; and student attendance. Only one-fourth of the students surveyed cited "theme" as the most important fact in their decision to attend WHS. Most students and parents were satisfied with the education provided at WHS. The following were recommended: developing and implementing a multicultural curriculum to teach appreciation/tolerance of ethnic diversity, establishing an appropriate discipline policy, and providing training and assistance in theme infusion. (Contains 10 references. Twenty-six tables/figures are included. Appended is a report on a dialogue among the magnet theme evaluators and selected history classes at WHS.) (MN)

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ED 376 308

# Process/Product Evaluation (Summative): Westport Business Technology Magnet High School

1990-1991
1991-1992
1992-1993

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June 1993

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# Process/Product Evaluation (Summative): Westport Business Technology Magnet High School

1990-1991
1991-1992
1992-1993

Sharon L. Newbill, Ph.D.
Program Evaluator

June 1993

Evaluation Office
Desegregation Planning Department
The School District of Kansas City, Missouri

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# Process/Product Evaluation (Summative) :
# Westport Business Technology
# Magnet High School

## 1990-1991
## 1991-1992
## 1992-1993

### Major Findings and Recommendations

The Westport Business Technology Magnet High School completed its third year of operation as part of the Kansas City, Missouri School District's *Long-Range Magnet School Plan*, hereafter referred to as the *Long-Range Plan* (Hale and Levine, 1986). This summative evaluation documents the progress made by Westport High School in implementing the Business Technology theme. The end-of-year report presents data collected through the program's third year of operation, including student demographics; program implementation; information as obtained through classroom and building observations; achievement data; and perceptions of teachers, parents, and students. The latter were obtained through questionnaire survey and dialogues.

Enrollment. Progress toward desegregation during the past three years has been negligible and there was a larger percentage of non-minority students enrolled before theme implementation (1989-1990) than now. Currently, the minority percentage hovers around 93%-94% in all grades, except tenth. Only the tenth-grade met desegregation goals this year with a decline in minority population by over 2%. Total enrollment in Westport Business has declined regardless of ethnicity, with a loss of 202 students from last year.

Desegregation trends at Westport High have been impacted by the increased enrollment of minority students of non-African-American decent. For example, the percentage of students who classify themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander has increased 4.5 times the past five years. This increase in "minority" students has washed out the slight decline in the percentage of African-American students through the years. Yet, the desegregation efforts have failed to increase non-minority ("White") enrollment at Westport High, which has declined by half since 1988-1989.

Attendance. In the spring, 96% of teachers surveyed felt student absences hindered their attempts to implement the theme to some degree. Daily attendance data were gathered for several magnet high schools at different months and days during the school year. Westport Business had a relatively higher percentage of absences compared to other district high schools for the first half of the year;

later, in March and April, most of the other schools surpassed Westport Business in percent of students absent. At Westport Business, about half of the students were absent all or part of the day, and around 20% missed at least half-day.

Dialogues with students provided some insight into why students skipped school and why many did so regularly. Ninth-graders weren't interested in school, tenth-graders weren't sure whether or not school had anything of relevance to offer them, and eleventh- and twelfth-graders felt completely alienated.

Teacher Perceptions and Concerns. Strengths of the Business program at Westport High stated by the teachers were staff commitment to the theme, a dedicated staff, and opportunities for students. Yet, a majority of teachers didn't affirm the school, the administration, or the theme effects. Areas of concern which emerged were 1) communication problems among the staff and administration, 2) organization, curriculum structure, and success of the theme in preparing students for Business, and 3) student attendance.

Correcting problems in staff communications appeared as a recommendation in the previous two evaluation reports (Brock, 1991; Benkofske, 1992). Indeed, the situation between the staff and school administration had improved quite a bit since last year. Nevertheless, over half of the teachers felt communications with the principal weren't good, and about three-fourths felt relations among the staff were so poor that it hindered their attempts to implement the theme to at least some degree. Core teachers were far less satisfied with the Business resource staff and program administrator than with their counterparts in Communications.

Regarding organization and curriculum, only one-third of teachers surveyed felt the existing magnet curriculum was well-coordinated and logically sequential. Nearly one-fourth thought the curriculum was in need of change. Finally, less than one-third of teachers surveyed felt Westport High was doing a good job in preparing students to compete for post-secondary jobs or to pursue advanced educational opportunities in business.

About half of the teachers didn't believe they had the supplies or access to the supplies needed to implement the magnet theme. Ten teachers (25% of 44 responding) identified lack of access to and/or availability of supplies, especially computers, as something that had made it hard to implement the magnet theme this year.

Infusion of either theme in any classroom, theme or core, was observed rarely, although nearly all of teachers felt they were able to infuse the theme into their classes. Theme infusion was observed in core classes a little more frequently than in theme classes (dual theme schools are supposed to

infuse the other theme in their theme classes), and most of these minutes were Business theme infusion. Several teachers expressed a desire for help in infusing the theme, with the added frustration that staff development didn't provided the necessary training. Importantly, multicultural infusion was observed rarely in theme classes and very infrequently in core classes.

Theme Choice and Student Perceptions. Responses to the student questionnaire found that only about a quarter of students chose " theme" as the most important factor in their decision to attend Westport High; the lack of interest in the theme by most students was stated in student dialogues, also. Yet, theme was most important to a higher percentage of students this year as compared to last. For the current year, the Business theme was the first choice of almost half of the parents surveyed; a majority would have preferred another theme, with Computers Unlimited at Central the predominant choice.

The majority of students surveyed expressed satisfaction with the theme and classes, and the over-all favorable attitude included slightly more students (about 2%) this year as compared to last. For example, considering attitudes toward Business theme classes, a significant improvement occurred since theme implementation three years ago when only 58% of students liked their Business classes as compared to 80% currently. Yet, nearly all students engaged in student dialogues didn't like the Business theme; favorable views of some theme classes (Communications) were expressed only by ninth-grade students. Also, students, primarily eleventh- through twelfth-grade, were very frustrated by the irrelevant coursework, and many upperclassmen expressed little interest in the Business theme.

Responses to the survey indicated that, overall, the students valued education and believed that school was "a place to get an education." In their written responses to a question asking them what they would miss at school if they didn't go, the majority said "classes" or "an education." The percentage varied little among ethnic groups, and was supported in student dialogues.

Student Opportunities. The majority of students surveyed said they had used a computer and learned about career opportunities in business. The latter contradicts observations made in the classrooms throughout the year. About two-thirds stated they had opportunities to explore different areas of business and to develop the advanced skills needed to secure a job in business. Importantly, classroom observations found that theme teachers infrequently relied upon worksheets in their classes. Further, a teacher working directly with a student (1:1 instruction) comprised almost half of theme classroom time. From student dialogues, students defined a "good" teacher as one who got them involved in learning and didn't just lecture. The amount of 1:1 instruction and hands-on

opportunities characterizes Business theme teachers as "good" as defined by the students. Improving relations, particularly mutual respect, could further solidify the student:teacher relationship.

Only a third of all students indicated they had worked with business tools other than computers. This low percentage suggests an emphasis on keyboard skills and limited exposure to other office machines as specified in the planning outline and curriculum guide. Their perception was supported by classroom observations which found the information system strand (e.g., keyboard skills) heavily emphasized. The student responses may be interpreted as indicating that the majority of students felt they had learned cognitive skills (e.g., concepts and issues) vital to success in business to a greater extent than they had technical skills (e.g., methods). However, critical thinking skills as evidenced by classroom discussions and critique were observed rarely.

Two-thirds of the students surveyed had attended classes or assemblies in which visiting experts had spoken about business. Only about one-third of juniors and seniors said they had participated in internship and shadowing programs in business this year. The student responses to these questions suggest that a portion of students did not avail themselves fully of the opportunities available or that the activities were not available to them for whatever reason. For example, a lower percentage of White students compared to the other ethnic groups indicated attendance at classes/assemblies with outside professionals (38%) and participation in internships (0%). Additionally, Asian and Hispanic students acknowledged theme-related experiences to a lesser degree than African-Americans and Whites. Regardless of barrier (language, wheel-chair access, ability level, etc.), theme-related opportunities should be available equally to all students.

Although a majority of students surveyed said they had learned about career opportunities in business, classroom observations infrequently found career-related discussions. Also in dialogue, juniors and seniors said they were ill-prepared for college or careers after high school, and felt Westport High had not taught the necessary basic skills to succeed in college. Team skills or a team approach to learning were rarely noted in the classroom.

Field trips were taken to Exchange City, The Federal Reserve Bank, Green Mills Candy Company, AMC Theatres, and DeVry Institute of Technology to name a few. Twenty-five students participated in a "shadowing" (i.e., mentor) program sponsored by Kemper Financial Services. Business-related issues and concerns were addressed by guest speakers from Ganett Outdoor Advertising, Full Employment Council, Becky Owens Merchandising, etc., and local businesses were invited to attend Business Week. Students also participated in DECA conferences on leadership and career development. One student received an award in a DECA advertising and visual

merchandising competition. Two students attended a luncheon sponsored by Kansas City Minority Supplier Development Council for Small Business of the Greater KC Chamber of Commerce.

Student Relations and Safety. The majority of students surveyed felt positively about their teachers and their counselors and felt that at least one teacher took special interest in them. Yet, from student dialogues, most students wanted their teachers not to have an "attitude", i.e., to respect them, value them, and treat them like adults. Also, juniors and seniors complained stridently about the counselors. A relatively smaller percentage of Asian students thought their teachers cared about them. Less than half of the students felt the principal cared about them, and the low percentage was a marked decline from last year. The Hispanic students were especially negative about the principal. In student dialogues, most students spoke highly of the principal when she was vice-principal, but in her role as principal, they found her less accessible and inflexible.

Of concern was students' sense of interpersonal relations which were worse this year compared to last. Less than half of all students believed they got along well with each other or thought students were well behaved in class. An undercurrent of racism was revealed in student dialogues, with African-American students intolerant of the Vietnamese (the predominant Asian population at Westport).

A majority of students felt student behavioral problems interfered with learning in their classes. When asked how they would make classes better, a third of those surveyed (or about two-thirds of those who felt discipline problems interfered with learning) offered comments. The overwhelming response was for the teacher to exert more class control, including stronger discipline. Students added that the disruptive students who didn't want to learn should be separated from those students that did.

Finally, students expressed concern about safety, particularly in the restrooms and on the grounds. Although the situation had improved since last year, safety was quite a concern among the Asian students. Extra security and/or a multicultural curriculum teaching tolerance are means of easing the fear. Although students were infrequently exposed to diverse cultures in the classroom, there were numerous multicultural displays throughout the building.

Drop-out Risk. A slight majority of students had a parent, sibling or close friend who dropped out of high school. A larger percentage of Hispanic students than other groups reported a close association with a high school drop-out. The association poses a significant risk factor to the successful completion of high school for these students. A need to make a determined effort to reach these students is apparent, especially since less than half of the students stated they had met with

counselors or teachers this year to develop a plan for their future. The students surveyed, by being in school, represent those still committed to school, and their risk of dropping out is minimized by their commitment. Also, some of the shadow of risk of dropping out is dispelled by the positive self-esteem the students surveyed expressed in response to this question, "If you could re-create yourself, how would you look?" The majority of students responded, and over half of these said they would look the same.

Project Choice. Project Choice offers a valuable incentive to a student population at risk of dropping out. The impact of Project Choice was clear: the large majority of the participating students said that Project Choice had made a positive difference in their life. The impact was felt most strongly among Hispanic, African-American, and White students and least among Asian students. Contrary to students, many teachers weren't satisfied with the impact Project Choice has had upon students at Westport High.

Parent Perceptions. Generally, the majority of parents were satisfied with the education provided, the teachers, the principal, and various communications from school. Overall satisfaction with Westport High had increased somewhat since last year; satisfaction with teachers had remained high; satisfaction with the principal had improved since theme implementation began which is interesting given the constant change in leadership.

A higher percentage of all parents would recommend Westport High to other parents this year as compared to years previous. However, comparing the past two years where data were available, a lower percentage of parents of ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade students planned to send their child to Westport next year. The observed decrease in parent satisfaction with academics and perceived benefits of the theme may be influencing parents in their decision not to continue to enroll their child at Westport High.

Achievement. Twenty to 30% of Business students didn't take the TAP according to January, 1993 enrollment figures (Research Office, 1993). The school administration should address the issue of attendance during TAP and encourage all students to take the tests.

Current MMAT scores of Westport tenth-grade students were comparable to the district in English/language arts and math. On the TAP, Westport Business students scored below the KCMSD across all grade levels in all subtests, except tenth-grade written expression. Minority students scored above the minority district averages in reading (ninth-grade) and written expression (ninth- and tenth-grade). Where data were available, non-minority Business students didn't meet non-minority

district averages. Westport Business students as a group scored below the national norms in the subtests examined.

Generally, since implementation of the Business theme in 1991, TAP scores have declined across all grade levels in every subtest. Compared to 1992, percentile ranks in reading (total group) rose a few points in ninth- and eleventh-grades; written expression rose or remained the same for ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grades; math declined in all grades.

Percentile ranks of a cohort of ninth-grade students (N=86, only one of whom was non-minority) enrolled in the Business theme at Westport for three years declined in all subtests, with the least decline occurring in math. The 1991 ninth-grade cohort scored at the national norm only in the written expression subtest and only as ninth-graders. Yet, written expression has shown the most precipitous drop since 1991.

**Recommendations**

1. *Develop and implement a multicultural curriculum with the purpose not only to celebrate African-American heritage, but also to teach an appreciation and tolerance of ethnic diversity.* Westport High enjoys the richest ethnic diversity of all high schools in the KCMSD. This diversity mandates a multicultural curriculum, and provides the school a unique opportunity to create a truly integrated environment. Currently, however, multicultural instruction was observed rarely; responses to the student questionnaire suggested differential participation in theme activities among ethnic groups; and Asian students were quite fearful about their personal safety. A more effective remedy for fear than increased security is education - eliminate the fear rather than control it. Teaching about other cultures makes differences familiar and understandable, and opens the mind to acceptance and respect. Teaching tolerance provides a long term remedy to fear.
2. *The building administration and teachers should make efforts to humanize the students experience at school; school should offer something students perceive as relevant to them and become a place students want to be.* Students specifically bemoaned the lack of school spirit; they requested all restrooms be opened, more assemblies, and more social activities around schooling. They also wanted better relations with their teachers, particularly mutual respect, and the upperclassmen wanted to be treated as adults. Also, in creating a more student-oriented school, dropouts may decline and attendance may improve. Currently, attendance for at least half-day, was around 80% of students enrolled.
3. *Develop and implement a discipline policy appropriate to Westport High School, and continue efforts to ensure teacher and student safety.* Surveys revealed that student behavior was a concern for a majority of both teachers and students. While teacher perceptions of safety had improved since last year, students, especially Asian, continued to be fearful. Special attention should be given toward relieving the

potential threat to student well-being in restrooms, on school grounds, in the halls, and in the cafeteria.

4. *The administration, instructional support staff, and teachers should study the results of classroom observation data.* Suitable levels of career-related courses and instruction of critical thinking skills should be determined. Instruction in these areas are goals of the magnet program, but were observed only minimally this year. Core teachers should be encouraged to develop teaching strategies which better engage students in learning. Also, improvements in academic and career counseling should be considered. In dialogue, upperclass students expressed considerable anger toward current academic counseling practices and described a gap in course offerings between what was required to graduate and what was available each semester. For students at risk of dropping out, which a high proportion at Westport High were found to be through responses to student and parent questionnaires, proactive and competent counseling is a necessity.
5. *Assistance and training in theme infusion should be provided to core teachers and efforts should be directed toward involving these teachers in theme-related decisions so they will more willingly contribute to theme implementation.* Infusion of the Business theme into core classes was observed only 10% of the time. In the spring survey, teachers complained that staff development didn't provide the training needed to infuse the theme into their subject area. Also, the majority of teachers believed communications between theme and core teachers were not good. Poor staff relations further isolated core teachers from resources needed in theme implementation.
6. *Improve communications between theme and core teachers, and between teachers and the building administration.* While relations between teachers and the administration had improved since last year, almost half of the teachers continued to believe communications weren't good. The majority of teachers, both theme and core, didn't feel communications among them were good or that they had one another's support. Almost two-thirds of the teachers believed communication problems hindered their attempts to implement the theme to at least some degree.
7. *Building administration should insure that all teachers, theme and core, have ready and equitable access to needed supplies.* The receipt of supplies and materials had improved since previous years, and about equal percentages of theme and core teachers said they had received the ordered materials. Yet, about half of the teachers surveyed didn't believe they had the supplies or access to the supplies needed to implement the theme.

## Program Description

The *Long-Range Plan* and the *Westport Business Magnet School Planning Document* (Westport Business Technology/Communications Magnet High School, 1992) describe a program offering a variety of coursework necessary to acquire the tools for a successful Business career. The theme currently is implemented through three strands: information systems, financial management, and

marketing. After a nine week rotation through survey courses (keyboard, careers, business, and business communications) which introduces ninth-graders to the theme, students select one of the three strands for their academic focus. The remaining three years of schooling progressively educate and train the students, both conceptually and technically, for a career or post-secondary education in business. A supplementary goal of the Business program is to provide students with an awareness of the different cultures, which is designed to develop in the students an appreciation of multicultural diversity (Westport Business Technology/Communications Magnet High School, 1992).

## Evaluation Design

The evaluation is facilitated through classroom observations and site visits, perception data gathered through interviews, dialogues, and questionnaires, and through data obtained from the district's Admissions Office, Research Office, and Testing Office. While the present report concentrates on the 1992-1993 school year, some data from 1990-1991 and 1991-1992 are included to show progress and change through time. Questions addressed in the summative evaluation were:

1. Has the school met established enrollment goals?
2. Was the program implemented as detailed in the *Long-Range Plan* and in the Westport Business planning outline?
3. What are parent, student, teacher, and school leadership perceptions about and attitudes toward the program?
4. What are the levels of student achievement in the school?

## Results

### Enrollment

When placing students in magnet school, the Placement Office follows the admissions policies as described in the *Long-Range Plan* (Hale and Levine, 1986). These guidelines include the placement of six minority students for every four non-minority students. According to the admissions policies, "if applications of non-minority students run out, minority students will continue to be accepted until the program is filled or until the minority percentage reaches a maximum level of 2% lower than the minority percentage in that school in the preceding year" (Hale and Levine, 1986, p. 18). Historically, this 2% guideline has been applied at each grade level and for each magnet theme when the school houses more than one theme. If, on the other hand, "applications of minority students run out, non-minority students will continue to be accepted until the program is filled or the non-minority percentages reaches 50%" (Hale and Levine, 1986, p. 18). Enrollment data

presented in this section are based on students who were actually enrolled on the last Wednesday in September as reported by the Research and Admissions Offices, and not on the number of students admitted; however, the enrollment data will be discussed using the admission guidelines as benchmarks for movement toward the desired desegregation of KCMSD schools.

Minority/non-minority enrollment figures are presented for four years: the year prior to magnet theme implementation (1989-1990) provides perspective to the three years of theme implementation. The enrollment data are reported by grade and ethnicity.

From Table 1, it appears that progress toward desegregation during the past three years of Business theme implementation has been negligible. There was a larger percentage of non-minority students enrolled before theme implementation (1989-1990) than now. Currently, the minority percentage hovers around 93%-94% in all grades, except tenth-grade. Only the tenth-grade enrollment was in keeping with the admissions guidelines discussed above (down to 88% from 93% the year previous). Yet, the reduction in minority percentage cannot be attributed to increased non-minority enrollment, but rather to fewer minority students enrolling. Indeed, following tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade from the year previous as ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-graders, respectively, there are fewer students returning to Westport Business regardless of ethnicity. The reduction in student population from last year is easily observed in the total row: there was a loss of 202 students from last year.

Westport High is singular in enrolling a relatively larger proportion of Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islanders (primarily Vietnamese), and American Indian/Alaskan Native students than the other high school in the district (Research Office, 1992). For the school as a whole the minority population enrolled as of September 1992 comprised: 72.5% African-Americans, 13.8% Hispanics, 12.3% Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 1.5% Native Americans. This diversity indicates a clear need for Westport High administration and staff to incorporate multicultural teaching into the school curriculum and activities.

Importantly, desegregation trends have been impacted by the increased enrollment of minority students of non-African-American descent. From Figure 1, it is evident that the percentage of students who classify themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander has increased 4.5 times the past five years. This increase in "minority" students has washed out the relative stasis of the percentage of African-American students through the years. Yet, the desegregation efforts have failed to increase non-minority ("White") enrollment at Westport High, which has declined by half since 1988-1989.

**Implementation**

Program implementation was evaluated using diverse sources of school-based data: classrooms, interviews, perception surveys, student dialogues, and attendance records. Observations were made in classrooms randomly selected from all available classrooms at the beginning of the school year. Observations were conducted from October through April with three classrooms observed, each for 20 minutes, every week: two theme and one core (i.e., English, math, science, or social studies). Observation variables were developed from the goals stated in the Business planning outline and discussions with school-based administration. Data regarding student activities, including team work, the activity focus (e.g., method, concept, issue), and theme infusion were observed during each session. Infusion could be coded as occurring on the occasions the theme was being infused into core classrooms and in all classrooms when instruction was multicultural (e.g., topic involved some culture or ethnic group, not necessarily racial group, other than mainstream White). In addition to observations, implementation was evaluated through attendance records, interviews with school leadership, perception surveys of teachers (fall and spring questionnaires), students (spring questionnaire and dialogues) and parents (spring telephone interview), and observations of physical evidence of the theme throughout the building.

**Materials/supplies availability and facilities.** Theme and core teacher perceptions about materials/supplies and the facility are presented in Table 2. Close to half of the teachers did not believe they had received the ordered supplies or had access to the necessary supplies, and differences between core and theme teacher perceptions were found. In the fall survey, 36% of themes (n=five) compared to 76% of core (n=32) teachers said they had received the necessary copies of the primary texts for their students. A higher percentage of core (57%) compared to theme (40%) felt they had access to the equipment and supplies needed to implement the theme in the fall. About equal percentages (theme=58% and core=56%) felt they had received the supplies ordered the previous spring. At year end the situation had improved with about equal percentages of theme (50%) and core (51%) teachers reporting they had access to the equipment and supplies needed to implement the theme. Still, about half of the teachers didn't believe they had the supplies nor access to the supplies needed to implement the magnet theme. Ten teachers (25% of 40 responding) identified lack of access to and/or availability of supplies, especially computers, as something that had made it hard to implement the magnet theme this year.

Construction of the new facility was completed a few days prior to the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year and teachers were rushed to prepare their classrooms. However, with the

building a year old, teachers were settled prior to the start of the current year. Regardless, only 56% were satisfied with the adequacy of the facility (Table 2). Teachers didn't elaborate on the reasons for their dissatisfaction so nothing concrete can be brought to the attention of the administration.

**Staff development/in-service.** A recommendation made last year developed from teacher's indicating a desire for in-service sessions focusing on goals of the Business theme and methods for infusing the theme into all classrooms. In the fall survey, 86% of both theme and core teachers said they were able to apply the information from theme-related summer in-service in their classrooms (Table 3). Yet, classroom observations of infusion indicate more effort is needed in providing teachers with methods for infusing the theme into their classes (see **Infusion** below).

**Staff.** Sixty-five percent of the teachers at Westport High School the current year taught at the school every year of Business theme implementation. Turn-over of the staff has been a little over one-third of the teaching staff during three years of theme implementation. Significantly, Westport High had an interim principal this year, who was a vice-principal at the school the year previous. Westport High has had five principals, including acting and interim the past three years, or a new one (or more) every year of implementation of the Business theme. This discontinuity has exacted costs to successful implementation of the magnet programs at Westport that are difficult to measure, but readily appreciated from teacher and student perceptions (see below).

**Attendance.** At the start of the year, about two-thirds of the teachers (theme=67% and core=61%) felt Westport High had a plan to reduce student absenteeism. However, marked differences in opinion emerged between theme and core perceptions in the accurate documentation of absences: 47% of theme and 74% of core teachers were satisfied that student absences were documented accurately. At the end of the year, teachers were asked to what degree student absenteeism hindered their attempts to implement the theme. Only 4% marked "Not at all" (Table 3); 96% of teachers found student absences to impair effective instruction in their classrooms. Also, at the end of the year survey, 10% of teachers (four of 40 responding with written comments) identified poor student attendance as something that had made it hard to implement the theme this year.

Daily attendance data were gathered for several magnet high schools at different months and days during the school year (Table 4). Comparative high schools were selected at random. Enrollment data were obtained from the Research Office and Student Record System; the latter also supplied daily attendance data which were collected and entered into the district database by each

high school. Only active enrollees were counted in both the enrollment and attendance files. The table shows Westport Business to have a relatively higher percentage of absences than the other high schools for the first half of the year; in March and April, most of the other schools surpassed Westport Business in percent of students absent. At Westport Business, about half of the students were absent all or part of the day, and around 20% missed at least half-day. While absences at the other high schools examined generally increased throughout the year, Westport Business experienced a reduction in absences during the spring.

Dialogues with students provide some insight into why students skipped school and why many did so regularly. Ninth-graders weren't interested in school, tenth-graders weren't sure whether or not school had anything of relevance to offer them, and eleventh- and twelfth-graders were completely alienated and had no reason to go.

Students participating in the spring questionnaire were asked to respond to the question, "In order to get me to come to school, Westport would have to...". One-hundred thirty-three students wrote comments, which was 79% of the total surveyed. The most frequently given response (30%) was that the school wouldn't have to do anything because they already wanted to come. The survey apparently captured half of students who did not regularly skip school any part of the day. Other inducements suggested by the students were make it more interesting (16%), treat students better (9%), and provide a better education (9%).

It was interesting to learn from the students that when they skipped school, they primarily stayed home (29% of written responses) or went to a friends house (27%). Principle activities were sleep (23%), eat (18%), and watch TV (17%). Another 16% of students said they went to the mall and 11% worked.

**Classroom observations.** As described fully above, observations were 20 minutes in length and were conducted throughout the year in classrooms selected at random. Classroom observations provide the empirical data needed to reliably evaluate theme implementation. Throughout the year, 779 minutes of Business theme classes and 799 minutes of core classes were observed. The results of the Business theme observations are presented in Table 5 and Figures 2, 3, and 4. The frequency of multicultural infusion observed in all classrooms is depicted in Figure 5. The observation results of core classrooms represent a composite of observations conducted throughout the year for both themes. The observation data complied from core classrooms regarding infusion did not differ between themes, and are combined here in order to present a complete

picture of infusion of the theme(s) and classroom instructional activities in the core classrooms at Westport High (Table 6 and Figures 6, 7, and 8).

Four categories, excluding infusion, were observed in theme and core classes: theme topics, activity focus, student activity, and interruptions. The subcategories, or topics and/or activities, included in each category and their frequency of occurrence in theme classes are in Table 5 and in core classes in Table 6. The tables should be reviewed with the awareness that there is no optimal amount of time for the incorporation of any activity into the classroom. Also, several activities could be recorded as occurring within an observation minute. A relative measure of the frequency of the occurrence of activities within a particular category is gained using a percentage of cumulative minutes rather than total observed minutes. In the figures, percentages derived from cumulative minutes, rather than percent of total observation minutes, are used.

Salient aspects of the theme classroom observations are:

1. the emphasis placed upon the strand Information Systems, which comprised over half of theme topic observations (Figure 2);
2. the infrequency of discussions pertinent to careers and career-related issues (Figure 2);
3. the lack of emphasis upon team skills and team approaching to learning (Figure 3);
4. the infrequency of "worksheet" as a student activity, which suggests Westport Business teachers didn't resort to "busy-work" to keep their class occupied (Figure 3);
5. the fact that 47% of teacher instruction was one-on-one (Figure 4);[1]
6. the absence of student discussion/critique which incorporates critical thinking skills (Figure 4);
7. the virtual absence of multicultural instruction (Figures 2 and 5).

Salient aspects of the core classroom observations are:

1. the insufficiency of multicultural instruction, although discussions of other cultures occurred in core classes to a greater frequency than in theme (Figure 5);
2. the infrequency of discussions pertinent to careers and career-related issues (Table 6). Core teachers weren't infusing the themes into their courses (see **Infusion**) and the low percentage of career-related discussions in core classes supports the suggestion that many core teachers were not "buying into" the themes;
3. the relatively frequent use of "worksheet" as a student activity (Figure 6);

[1]Embedded within teacher instruction are student listen, student question/response, and student discussion, which are a continuum of possible responses to teacher instruction. During classroom observations, each minute coded as teacher instruction also coded one of the possible student minutes of 1:1 is the remainder aftersubtracting all minutes of student response from total minutes of teacher instruction.

4. the virtual absence of team skills and team approaching to learning, which, as theme implementation goals, again supports the notion that core teachers weren't involved fully in theme implementation (Figure 6);
5. the fact that 15% of instruction was 1:1 (Figure 7);
6. the dearth of student discussion/critique, although more evident than in theme classes (Figure 7).

In summary, theme teachers should be praised for their instructional efforts, especially the emphasis placed on 1:1 teaching and minimal use of worksheets. However, some areas require attention since certain goals of the magnet program were minimally observed this year. The curriculum should be revised several ways. Firstly, it must include diverse cultures since the student population at Westport High is so ethnically rich. Secondly, students require more exposure to career-related courses/topics. Thirdly, students need more opportunities in the classroom for discussion and critique as these embody critical thinking abilities, as well as opportunities to work in teams in order to gain the cooperative skills necessary in business. Finally, core teachers should be encouraged to develop alternative teaching strategies which better involve students in the learning process.

**Infusion.** Teacher perceptions of their ability to infuse the theme differed substantially from that practiced in the classrooms. Ninety-eight percent of teachers surveyed in the spring said they had been able to infuse the theme in the subject(s) they taught (Table 3). Yet, observations suggest something very different (Figure 8). The graph displays infusion observed throughout the year of 1) both themes which occurred during all classroom observations of Business, Communications, and core classrooms, 2) both themes into core class, 3) Business infused into Communications classes, and 4) Communications infused into Business classes. It is clearly evident that infusion of either theme in any classroom, theme or core, was observed only 4% of the time (n=110 of 2589 total observation minutes). Infusion of the Business theme into core classes was observed only 10% of the time (n=81 of 799 core minutes); infusion of either theme was observed 13% of the time (n=100 of 799 core classroom observation minutes). Observation of Communications classes yielded 10 minutes of Business infusion, which is 1% of the 1011 observation minutes of Communications classes. Finally, at no time during the 779 minutes of Business classroom observations was the Communications theme infused into the Business classes.

In their responses to open-ended questions, some core teachers expressed a desire for help in infusing the theme. They complained that staff development didn't provide the training needed to

infuse the theme into their subject area. One teacher captured the essence of the void by stating, "I'm not sure what infusion means."

As indicated above in the discussions of the classroom observations, relating instructional content to different cultures was observed only 3% of the time (Figure 5, 78 minutes out of 2589 minutes observed in all classrooms, regardless of theme). It is evident that both theme and core teachers need encouragement and training in multicultural instruction.

**Evidence of theme.** In the months of December and April, physical evidence of the magnet theme was documented at Westport High. One-hundred fifteen locations within the school, including classrooms, were visited (see Table 7). The observer noted such items as: student work, theme posters, equipment, books, writings, information about careers, and depictions of different cultures. The amount of visible theme-related evidence observed this year was a considerable improvement from last year. In the classrooms, some of which accommodated both core and theme classes, 77% had visible evidence of the theme. Pictures/posters and newspaper and/or magazine clippings comprised the majority of the material. Over half of the classrooms (58%) had multicultural evidence. However, only 16% displayed theme-related careers. Across all sites, 77% had evidence of the theme, and over half (57%) included diverse cultures. However, only about one-fourth (27%) of the evidence was student work. Two-thirds (66%) of other sites (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, art, music) in the building had theme-related evidence, and nearly half of these were multicultural.

**Theme-related activities.** Field trips were taken to Exchange City, The Federal Reserve Bank, Green Mills Candy Company, AMC Theatres, and DeVry Institute of Technology to name a few. Twenty-five students participated in a "shadowing" (i.e., mentor) program sponsored by Kemper Financial Services. Business-related issues and concerns were addressed by guest speakers from Ganett Outdoor Advertising, Full Employment Council, Becky Owens Merchandising, etc. Local businesses were invited to attend Business Week; the guests were greeted in the parking lot by uniformed ROTC members and escorted to the door, where a business student welcomed them. Students also participated in DECA conferences on leadership and career development. One student received an award in a DECA advertising and visual merchandising competition. Two students attended a luncheon sponsored by Kansas City Minority Supplier Development Council for Small Business of the Greater KC Chamber of Commerce.

**Perceptions**

**Teacher perceptions.** Business and core/support teacher perceptions of the progress of magnet theme implementation, staff relations, and student-centered issues were gathered through fall and spring questionnaires. Westport High is a dual theme school, and core/support teacher responses are interpreted to apply to their experience in either theme, unless they specified their response to a particular theme. In addition to defined response categories, teachers were given the opportunity to write in comments with anonymity assured. Results of the spring questionnaire are in Table 3. The reader needs to be apprised that the resource teachers (n=five, 33% of theme teachers or 9% of all teachers surveyed) received termination notices prior to completing the questionnaire.

Strengths of the Business program at Westport High stated by the teachers were staff commitment to the theme, a dedicated staff, and opportunities for students. Yet, a majority of teachers didn't affirm the school, the administration, or the theme effects. Areas of concern which emerged were 1) communication problems among the staff and administration, 2) organization, curriculum structure, and success of the theme in preparing students for business, and 3) student attendance. The latter was discussed above (see **Attendance**) and will not be reiterated in the discussions below. The concern with communications is not new, and was the subject of recommendations made in the previous two evaluation reports (Brock, 1991; Benkofske 1992).

*Communication*s. School began on a positive note with 88% of theme and core teachers believing that an effort was being made by the faculty and administration to improve the climate at Westport High. Indeed, comparing this year's and last year's responses to identical questions about communications and support, the situation with the administration had improved considerably since last year. For example, 49% of teachers this year as compared to 11% last year reported good communications with the principal. Still over half of the teachers felt communications with the principal weren't good. An even greater improvement in communications occurred between teachers and the vice-principals (84% currently compared to 23% last year). Also, about a third more teachers this year than last felt the principal and vice-principals supported their efforts to implement the theme. However, considerable differences remain primarily between teachers and resource teachers, and between teachers and the program administrator. Essentially, core teachers were far less satisfied with the Business resource staff and program administrator than with those in Communications.

In the spring survey, 60% of the Business teachers didn't think the program administrator had provided the support needed to implement the theme; less than half of all teachers (49%) and only 13% of Business teachers felt there was good communication with the program administrator (Table 3). Over two-thirds of the entire staff (33% of core and 75% of theme teachers) had unfavorable perceptions of communications between teachers and the resource staff. Nearly two-thirds of core teachers didn't feel they had the support of the resource teachers, and the majority of both theme and core didn't feel the curriculum coordinator was supportive (56%, see Table 3). Only a slight majority (53%) of all teachers felt that communications with parents were good, but a large majority (89%) felt positively about communications with students.

Significantly, almost three-fourths of all teachers (and 100% of Business teachers) felt that communication problems among faculty-staff hindered their attempts to implement the theme to at least some degree (Table 3). Also, in written comments to a question asking teachers to identify things that have made it hard to implement the theme this year, 18% (n=seven of 40) mentioned lack of support or help from the resource teachers, especially Business resource teachers (four of seven comments specifically mentioned Business resource teachers); 15% (n=six) stated incompetence of the school-based administration; and 15% (n=six) identified lack of communication between the staff and administration. The groundwork needed to ameliorate the rift among teachers seems to be in place for in written comments regarding the strengths of the magnet program 38% of teachers (n=15 of 40 responding) mentioned the qualified and dedicated staff.

*Organization.* At the beginning of the year, the majority of teachers (64%) felt that Westport High was organized effectively to achieve its goals. By the end of the year, only 47% of teachers who offered an opinion felt the existing magnet curriculum was well-coordinated and logically sequential (Table 3). Significantly, 23% (n=13 of 56) of the teachers didn't have an opinion regarding the magnet curriculum, and the inclusion these teachers in the response percentages brought the positive responses down from 47% to 36%. Although some teachers (23%, n=nine of 40 responding) believed the variety of opportunities to use business technology equipment to be a strength of the program, others (24%, n=nine of 38 responding) thought the curriculum was in need of change. Ideas offered most frequently were the integration of and cross-fertilization between theme and core classes to create one school, and the elimination of resource teachers, with the expenditure of those monies on classroom and student activities. The absence of cross-discipline interaction is evident by the infrequent use of communications resources (e.g.,radio/broadcast facilities and photography lab) reported by the theme and core teachers surveyed (Table 3).

A by-product of organization is the effects of the theme. In this regard, only 29% of all teachers surveyed (n=16 of 56) felt Westport High was doing a good job in preparing students to compete for post-secondary jobs in communications and/or business or to pursue advanced educational opportunities. For some reason, 17 teachers (30%) had no opinion on this question. (Note: Table 3 shows 41% of teachers agreed to question 21, but this percentage reflects only those teachers with an opinion.) Finally, considering the strong impact Project Choice had upon students (see below) it was somewhat surprising to learn that 43% of teachers were dissatisfied with it (Table 3).

**Student Perceptions.** Perceptions were gathered through a questionnaire administered in English classes and a day of dialogue with students enrolled in History classes. Both methods allowed a broad spectrum of students of all grades and ethnic groups to present their opinions of the magnet theme and their school.

*Questionnaire*. Thirty-one percent (n=169) of the Business students participated in a written survey regarding their perceptions of the magnet program at Westport High. The students were selected from a random sample of English/language arts classes. English class for the Vietnamese students was convened in an ESL classroom and not in the regular English/language arts (that is, the Vietnamese students were not mainstreamed into English classes). The ESL teacher administered the questionnaire to several classes of Vietnamese students in their native language. The same questionnaire was administered to all students. It asked for their perceptions of the school, the theme, the teachers and staff, and relations with other students. The results are presented in Table 8 for all students and by ethnic group in Table 9. Where longitudinal data are available, trends in student perceptions since theme implementation are discussed in the text.

From Table 8, only 27% of students chose "theme" as the most important factor in their decision to attend Westport High. Yet, theme was most important to a higher percentage of students this year as compared to last (27% currently vs. 19% in Spring 1992). "Liking the school," which includes Project Choice as a written response, was the most frequently selected reason this year (41%). This was true regardless of ethnicity (Table 9). Yet, proportionately more Asians liked the theme (36%) and more Whites liked the school (67%). Nevertheless, the majority of all students expressed satisfaction with the theme and classes (Table 8), and the over-all favorable attitude included slightly more students (about 2%) this year as compared to last. For example, 89% indicated they were both glad to be going to the Business Technology magnet and liked learning about business; 88% said that someday they would like a job in business; 80% liked most of their Business classes. Regarding the latter, a substantial improvement has occurred since theme implementation three years ago when

only 58% of students liked their Business classes. Currently, for a slight majority (52%), the theme had increased their interest in school and classes. Looking at Table 9, this was felt most strongly by the Asian students (78%) as compared to African-Americans (50%), Hispanics (50%), and Whites (33%). [Note: these perceptions about the theme differ from those obtained in student dialogues.]

Regarding the opportunities gained this year, the majority of students (Table 8 and Figure 9) had used a computer (87%) and learned about career opportunities in business (84%). Yet, only 65% stated they had an opportunities to explore different areas of business which constitutes the Business survey class required of all students entering the theme. Only a third of all students indicated they had worked with business tools other than computers. This low percentage suggests an emphasis on keyboard skills and limited exposure to other office machines as specified in the planning outline and curriculum guide, which is supported by classroom observation data. Yet, 68% of students agreed to a complementary question asking about opportunities to develop the advanced skills needed to secure a job in business. The somewhat divergent response to these questions (e.g., business tools and advanced skills) is interpreted to indicate that the majority of students felt they had learned cognitive skills (e.g., concepts and issues) vital to success in business to a greater extent than they had technical skills (e.g., methods). Yet, observational data found that critical thinking skills as developed through discussion and critique occurred infrequently.

Two-thirds of students had attended classes or assemblies in which visiting experts had spoken about business. The planning outline indicates that these activities are available to all students, so the lack of 100% agreement is puzzling. Also, only 34% of juniors and seniors participated in internship and shadowing programs in Business this year. The student responses suggest that a portion of students did not avail themselves fully of the opportunities available or that the activities were not available to them for whatever reason (see Table 9). For example, a lower percentage of White students compared to the other ethnic groups indicated attendance at classes/assemblies with outside professionals (38%) and participation in internships (0%). Also, Asian and Hispanic students acknowledged theme-related experiences to a lesser degree than African-Americans and Whites (Table 9 and Figure 9). Regardless of barrier (language, wheel-chair access, ability level, etc.), theme-related opportunities should be available equally to all students. As a related concern, classroom observations found little evidence of multiculturalism.

Although a majority of students (84%) surveyed said they had learned about career opportunities in business, classroom observation data found little time spent on career-related issues and team building skills. Also, less than half of the students (41%) stated they had met with counselors or

teachers this year to develop a plan for their future (Table 8). Only 29% of Asian students reported such a meeting (Table 9). A goal of the magnet program is for all students to engage in weekly goal setting and weekly goal review activities (Westport Business Technology/ Communications Magnet High School, 1992). Either this magnet program goal was not met, or the students did not perceive the weekly goal setting and review activities as "developing a plan for my future", or the process was not available to all students.

Regarding student perceptions of the teachers and staff (Table 8), the majority felt positively about their teachers (72%) and counselors (77%). Nearly all students (85%) felt that at least one teacher took a special interest in them. The relationship with the principal was far less positive, however (46%), and represents a marked decline from last year (62%). From Table 9 it is interesting to note that a relatively smaller percentage of Asian students thought their teachers cared about them (61% with 74% being the next lowest). The White students especially felt the principal cared about them (89%) whereas only about a third of the Hispanic students felt so (35%).

Also, of concern was students' sense of interpersonal relations which were worse this year compared to last. Less than half of all students (Table 8) believed they got along well with each other (44% currently compared to 51% Spring 1992) or thought students were well behaved in class (44% currently, which is an improvement from last year's 36%). A majority (53%) felt student behavior problems interfered with learning in their classes. Finally, students expressed concern about safety, particularly in the restrooms (46% did not feel safe) and on school grounds (45% did not feel safe). All of these concerns were felt most acutely by the Asian students (Table 9). An intolerance of Asians students, felt most strongly among ninth-grade African-American students, was voiced in student dialogues.

Attention must be directed to establishing connections with the Asian and Hispanic populations at Westport High. A genuine effort to promote cultural understanding and tolerance through a multicultural curriculum is highly relevant at Westport. Until a curriculum teaching tolerance is implemented, extra security is warranted to relieve the potential threat to student well-being in those areas where they feel especially vulnerable, and special efforts must be made to ensure the safety of all students.

Students were asked to write why they thought students didn't get along well with each other, and 69 offered written explanations (41% of the total taking the survey, or about two-thirds of those said they didn't get along). Of those responding, 22% said "fights" in general. A variety of reasons were mentioned that are considered to be associated with fights: jealousy (19%) and "he say, she

say" (13%) were the most frequently mentioned. In addition to fights, another 14% of the students said that they just didn't like each other, with 12% specifically mentioning race relations. Proportionately more Hispanics (40%, n=four of 10 responding) said something about race as compared to Asians (17%, n=one of six responding) and African-Americans (6%, n=three of 48 responding); no White students specifically mentioned race. Having a "bad attitude" was identified by 10% of the students; gangs were a factor for 9% of students surveyed all of whom were either African-American (n=four) or Hispanic (n=two). These are representative comments:

> "Because very often there are fights."
> "Because they are jealous of each other & some just don't like each other."
> "People at this school don't get along because of he say, she say stuff. It's just stupid stuff. And I think it's envy too. "
> "Gangs and jealousy."

Students who thought behavioral problems interfered with learning were asked to write how they would make classes better. Fifty-five (33% of those surveyed, or about two-thirds of those responding "Yes") offered comments. The overwhelming response was for the teacher to exert more class control, including stronger discipline (60%). Another 31% added that the disruptive students who didn't want to learn should be separated from those students that did. Responses varied little among the ethnic groups, except that none of the Asian students suggested removal of recalcitrant students. One Asian (17%, n=one of six responding), one Hispanic (11% of nine responding), and three African-American (9% of 34 responding) wanted better and more understanding teachers. These are representative comments:

> "Teachers don't break it up quick enough. Discipline isn't used strong enough on the big problem causers."
> "Teacher could become more strict in discipline."
> "Put all the kids who don't want to learn OUT."
> "Remove students with bad behavior from the class."
> "Make teachers more understanding."

A slight majority of students (53%) had someone close to them (a parent, sibling or close friend) who dropped out of high school (Table 8). This poses a significant risk factor to the successful completion of high school for these students (Fine, 1991). Hispanic students are especially at risk with 81% reporting a close association with a high school drop-out (Table 9). Some of the shadow of risk of dropping out may be dispelled by the positive self-esteem the students expressed in response to this question, "If you could re-create yourself, how would you look?" Over half of those responding (59%, n=79 of 135) said they would look the same. This is a strong message since 80%

of the students surveyed wrote comments to this question (n=135 of 169). Making no change remained the majority response, but the percentage varied among ethnic groups: 64% of African-Americans, 31% of Hispanics, 40% of Asians, and 71% of Whites. Of those wanting some change, 43% involved some sort of physical re-creation (some students who liked the way they where also mentioned they wouldn't mind some physical change). Most frequently these were "better looking" or "cuter" (16%), "slimmer" (15%), or "taller" (12%). The responses did not differ among the ethnic groups, and the relative percentages did not differ much either.

Project Choice offers a valuable incentive to a student population at risk of dropping out. The impact of Project Choice was clear: 89% of the participating students said that Project Choice had made a positive difference in their life (Table 8). From Table 9, the impact was felt most strongly among Hispanic students (100%), African-Americans (90%), and Whites (86%). The incentive seems not as powerful for the Asian students with only 73% agreeing that Project Choice had made a positive difference.

Students in Project Choice were asked to write how the program had made a difference in their life, and 67 of 98 responded (68%, or all but 10% of those indicating that Project Choice had made a positive difference). The most frequently mentioned effect was that it offered a chance for a better future (49%). This was the answer given most often by students in all ethnic groups, except White students who predominantly felt that Project Choice made them try harder (60%, n=three of five). Project Choice for all students also increased their chances of getting into college (21%) and improved self-esteem (21%). Significantly, almost half of the Hispanic students (41%) mentioned better self-esteem, which makes the program especially valuable for these students at high risk of dropping out (recall 81% said they knew someone who had dropped out).

Overall, the students surveyed believed school was "a place to get an education" (54% of responding to a question "School is ...?", n=79 of 149) Twenty-three percent went so far as to say school was fun and interesting, which compares to the 11% who said school was boring. Another 17% thought school was "all right" or "good." Proportionately more Asian students wrote "good" or "ok" (43%, n=six of 14) compared to about 15% of the other ethnic groups. The relatively higher percentage may reflect their limited English vocabulary, and their response may be comparable to "fun" and "interesting" written by the other groups. Two (14%) of Asians felt school was "not safe"; one Hispanic (5%) and two African-Americans (2%) agreed.

That the majority of students in the Business theme at Westport High valued education is gained from the above. Support for this is found in their written responses to a question asking them what

they would miss at school if they didn't go. Fifty-nine percent said "classes" or "an education" (n=87 of 147 responding, which represents 87% of those surveyed). The percentage varied little among ethnic groups (59% of African-Americans, 70% of Hispanics, 50% Asians, and 50% Whites). Understandably, the second most frequent response was "friends' (50%). Notably, 15% said they would miss their teachers, but this varied among ethnic groups: 12% of African-Americans, 20% of Hispanics, 8% (n=one) of the Asians, and 38% (n=three) of the Whites. Only 8% of the students said they would miss nothing.

*Dialogue.* Dialogues were held with 112 students in eight History classes. This method created an interactive and dynamic environment in which students could express their opinions about "The Meaning of Schooling." Dialogues with students enrolled in History classes provided a broad sample of students since all students must take a History/American Government class every year. As a "core" classroom, rather than a theme, these students were in either the Business Technology or the Communications theme. No effort was made to distinguish students by theme, and some seniors weren't enrolled in either magnet theme. Always, however, students related their feelings to a particular theme whenever such issues arose. A complete discussion of the purpose, methods, and results of the student dialogues are in Appendix A. Only the most salient points will be mentioned here. Generally, the information gained from the questionnaire were supported by and enhanced in the dialogues.

## Patterns of Similarity and Difference

It was hoped that the student dialogues would reveal patternings which would better illuminate the student-centered experiences at Westport High. It was thrilling and fortunate that patterns emerged clearly and definitively. The dialogues uncovered several patterns of similarity:

1. All students, regardless of grade and ethnicity, felt getting an education was important. Further, they believed school was an investment in their future. Success was commonly defined as graduating from high school, having a family, getting a good job, or going to college. The Vietnamese students defined success as doing well in school, nothing further.
2. A strong undercurrent of racism emerged from the dialogues. African-American students in the lower grades didn't want the Vietnamese in their classes. The Vietnamese primarily were in ninth- and tenth-grade classrooms, were not fluent in English, older than the other students (often 19 years or older), and did well academically. The African-American students complained that the Vietnamese were always talking in their "Ching Ching", were talking about them, and that the teacher always worked with them which got them (the African-Americans) behind in their work.
3. Students described a "good" teacher as one "without an attitude". Students defined "without an attitude" as: a teacher that interacted with them as people, valued them

as people, respected and treated them as adults, trusted them, and had high expectations of them (upperclassmen only). Also, a good teacher was able to interest and involve them in class. They didn't like teachers who compared students to other students.

4. Students were asked what they would want to change about Westport High. The majority of students agreed on these changes so the list of wasn't long. Topping the list and heard in every class was to open the restrooms. At Westport High, only the restrooms (two for each sex) on the ground floor were open throughout most of the year. The principal explained to me later that she had all restrooms open the beginning of the year, but that students started tearing them up around November. According to the principal, the restrooms required extensive repair which the district was slow to fund. Other frequently mentioned changes were: more school activities, assemblies, and after school clubs; a desire to be treated as an adult and respected by teachers.

Patterns of difference which clearly distinguished ninth-graders from all other classes, and which characterized tenth-grade as a critical time in high school where a student could be won or lost, were discovered also:

1. *Ninth-graders*. It was very difficult to get these students to respond, except to questions about what they don't like about school. Yet, many eventually responded, and this pattern emerged: ninth-grade students valued education, but absolutely did not want to work. They wanted more time between classes and shorter days, specifically Fridays off. Most classes didn't interest them, except for a few Communications classes. However, most weren't particularly thrilled by either theme and weren't at Westport High because of a particular magnet theme. Also, they didn't have any ideas about how the classes could be improved to increase their interest. These students absolutely didn't want to be *made* to learn, and resisted all efforts perceived as forced learning. Their favorite teachers were those that were lenient, didn't have an "attitude" (i.e., respected them), didn't make them work, and let them do just about whatever they want. These students felt the education they were getting at Westport High was good and sufficient to succeed in life.
2. *Tenth-graders*. Generally, tenth-grade students talked more, had more opinions, and were more attentive than the ninth-graders. Tenth-graders also valued education, but weren't fully involved in their education yet. They appeared to be in a holding pattern, and not quite ready to commit themselves to anything yet, including school work. They weren't as eager as ninth-graders to do nothing but play all day; they seemed over being wild at school, but not sure of the alternative.

   These students "hoped" the education they were getting at Westport High was providing them the basic skills they needed to succeed (which was college and/or a good job). Certainly they weren't worried about it at this point, but were more concerned with school than ninth-graders. They liked some classes and found some interesting, but they didn't like Business classes. Interesting classes were classes that involved them in learning, the teacher explained things well, and where they didn't just have to sit and listen to a lecture.

3. *Eleventh- and Twelfth-graders.* At this stage in their high school career and having made it this far (and perhaps evolving from ninth- and tenth-grade mind-set), these students were mad, frustrated, and scared. The strongly believed Westport High had let them down. They *knew* they were not prepared for college, vocational training, or to get a good job. Westport High had not provided the skills they needed and teachers hadn't taught them what they needed. However, several students admitted that it wasn't all the teachers fault, but that they hadn't worked as hard as they should have earlier on. Yet, many concurred that classes had been too easy, not demanding, and that teacher expectations were low.

   Juniors and seniors wanted classes that were relevant; they wanted college prep classes, more interesting English classes, more college-bound teaching. As one student put it, there was a gap between what was needed and what was offered. They felt like a second-class school. For example, they were using textbooks from Central High, a Computer and Classical Greek magnet which cost $36 million to build. One male student put it very well, "If you are treated like garbage, you feel like garbage." Another said, "If we use out-of-date books, we are out-of-date."

   Upperclassmen were very frustrated by inept counselors as well as irrelevant coursework. Some students said they were re-taking some of the same classes because a counselor had messed up their credits; others said they weren't getting the classes they asked for; others were going to night school and Saturday school in order to graduate this year.

   Eleventh- and twelfth-graders wanted teachers to treat them like an adult, to trust them, to explain things well, to be patient, and to have higher expectations of them. One said, "They [teachers] want us to act like adults, but they don't treat us like adults." Teachers expected students to respect them, but they didn't respect students in turn. Asian students differed on this point for they said simply, "You respect teachers."

   These students had nothing good to say about the magnet themes and reaped no benefits of the themes. They hated Business class (Communications theme classes and equipment were available only to ninth- and tenth-graders). Juniors and seniors weren't prepared for the skills expected of them in the Business theme classes, and "typing" wasn't relevant to them. Most of these students weren't at Westport High because of the theme. Further, they were put off by not being allowed to use the radio and TV facilities. Most of these students thought school was worse since magnet theme implementation for there were fewer activities, assemblies, freedom, and less school spirit. Many complained about the lack of school spirit; they said there was more school spirit and sense of pride when they were freshmen.

**Parent Perceptions.** A 10% sample of parents of students enrolled in the Business Technology theme the current year were randomly selected for telephone interview. An attempt to obtain the perceptions of parents of Vietnamese students over the telephone proved unsuccessful due to the language barrier. Fifty-six parents responded to questions about theme, school, and transportation (Tables 10, 11, 12, and Appendix B). Ninety-one percent were parents of minority stu-

dents (86% of the minority parents or 44 were African-American and 14% or seven were Hispanic) and 9% (n=five) were non-minority parents. Some questions were asked in years previous and, if present, trends in parent perceptions since theme implementation are reported.

For the current year, the Business theme was the first choice of 47% of parents; 53% would have preferred another theme, with Computers Unlimited at Central the predominant choice (Table 10).

Three reasons over half of the parents indicated as most influential in their decision to send their child to Westport were 1) theme (64%), 2) child attended last year and wanted to return (63%), and 3) the school was close to home (54%). Project Choice was a factor for 45% of parents. When asked to choose among the list provided which was the most important reason in their decision to send their child to Westport High, 28% indicated Project Choice and 22% stated theme.

Parents were asked what would be important to them in choosing a *school* for their child today (Table 10). A building in good condition was picked most frequently by parents (95%), with liking the theme a very close second (91%). At least three-fourths of parents gave electives (86%), fewer students in the classroom (82%), extra-curricular activities (77%), and neighborhood around the school (75%) as important in their choice of school. Racial mix in a school (68%) and nearness to home (64%) were the least relevant to parents in their choice of school. Of the list provided, the reason *most* important to the majority of parents in choosing a school was theme (29%); closeness to home was important to 11% of parents. Twenty-nine of the 55 parents surveyed offered factors other than those presented in the questionnaire as important in their choice of school: 15 of 29 (52%) stated that good, caring teachers which included good communications among parents/students/teachers would be most important to them in their choice of school. Also, seven of 29 (24%) cited quality of academic content and six of 29 (21%) said safety would be most important.

Considering parent perceptions of Westport High and the Business theme, the majority of parents were satisfied with the education provided, the teachers, the principal, and various communications from school (Table 11). Overall satisfaction with Westport High had increased somewhat since last year (from 89% in Spring 1992 to 93% currently); satisfaction with teachers had remained constant above 90%; satisfaction with the principal had improved since theme implementation which is interesting given the constant change in leadership (83% in Spring 1991, 90% in Spring 1992, and 94% currently).

Safety was less a concern compared to past years, with perceptions of safety improving since theme implementation (72% Spring 1991, 66% Spring 1992, and 82% currently). However, a lower

percentage of White (40%) and Hispanic parents (67%) felt their child was safe as compared to African-American (81%).

A higher percentage of all parents would recommend Westport High to other parents this year as compared to years previous (86% in Spring 1991, 87% in Spring 1992, and 94% currently). However, comparing the past two years where data are available, a lower percentage of parents of ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade students planned to send their child to Westport next year (from 96% in Spring 1992 to 85% currently). Possible reasons for the decline in parent loyalty may be indicated in their perceptions of academic progress and potential benefits of the theme. Satisfaction with their child's progress in reading and writing had declined somewhat since last year (reading down from 87% in Spring 1992 to 82% currently; satisfaction with writing was down from 88% in Spring 1992 to 84% currently). Parent satisfaction with math improved, however, with 79% of parents satisfied with their child's progress this year compared to 73% last year.

Ethnic differences emerged regarding satisfaction with academics at Westport High. Hispanic parents were less satisfied than African-American and White parents with their child's progress in the magnet theme (satisfied=71% Hispanic vs. 85% African-American vs. 100% White) and in the basic skills of reading (satisfied= 57% Hispanic vs. 81% African-American vs. 100% White) and math (satisfied= 57% Hispanic vs. 77% African-American vs. 80% White). Perhaps of greater potential influence upon a parents decision to keep their child at Westport than academic progress is the perceived impact of the theme. Fewer parents believed the Business theme would improve their child's chances of getting a job this year (89%) as compared to last (94%). Thus, while not definitive, the observed decrease in parents satisfaction with academics and perceived benefits of the theme to their child's future may be influencing parents in their decision not to continue to enroll their child at Westport High, and this finding may be contributing to the losses in student enrollment discussed above. Future years of perception and enrollment data are needed to determine whether a significant trend in parental disaffection with the theme is occurring. Notably, parent responses suggested that more parents would be willing to help with school activities than had been asked (Table 12).

A risk-factor for students dropping out of high school is whether a family member had dropped out (Fine, 1991). Only 25% of all parents reported having another child or themselves dropping out of high school. However, this risk-factor was considerably higher for Hispanic students where 43% of parents reported familial dropout (compared to 20% African-American and no White). The Hispanic students may be under additional stress by the expectations their parents place on them:

100% of Hispanic parents (n=seven) surveyed reported making concrete plans for their child after high school, and all were college-bound. This compares to 60% of White (n=three of five) and 43% (n=24) of African-American parents who stated that their child had made plans for after high school. Of these, 40% of White and 94% of African-American parents said plans for their child included attending college.

**Achievement**

**TAP.** A summary of Westport Business Technology and KCMSD test scores for spring 1990 through 1993 are presented in Table 13 as percentile ranks. Percentile ranks were derived from conversion of mean grade equivalent scores, with the national norm lying at the 50th percentile. Scores in the subtests of reading, written expression, and math are presented for minority and non-minority students.

It first should be pointed out that 20%-30% of Business students didn't take the TAP this year. According to January, 1993 enrollment figures (Research Office, 1993), there were considerably more students enrolled in every grade than took the test:

of 124 ninth-graders enrolled only 84 (68%) took the TAP;
of 105 tenth-graders enrolled only 63 (60%) took the TAP;
of 123 eleventh-graders enrolled only 100 (81%) took the TAP;
of 144 twelfth-graders enrolled only 100 (69%) took the TAP.

The school administration should address the issue of attendance during TAP and encourage all students to take the tests.

An examination of the 1993 data shows that Westport Business students scored below the KCMSD across all grade levels in all subtests, except tenth-grade written expression. Westport Business students as a group scored below the national norms in the subtests examined. Minority students scored above the minority district averages in reading (ninth-grade) and written expression (ninth- and tenth-grade). Where data were available, non-minority Business students didn't meet non-minority district averages.

Generally, since implementation of the Business theme in 1991 scores have declined across all grade levels in every subtest. Compared to 1992, percentile ranks in reading (total group) rose a few points in ninth- and eleventh-grades; written expression rose or remained the same for ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grades; math declined in all grades.

Percentile ranks of a cohort of ninth-grade students (N=86, only one of whom was non-minority) who have been enrolled in the Business theme at Westport for three years are presented in Figures 10, 11, and 12 for reading, written expression, and math, respectively. Scores for the cohort declined

since ninth-grade in all subtests examined, with the least decline occurring in math. The 1991 ninth-grade cohort scored at the national norm only in written expression subtest and only as ninth-graders (Figure 11). Yet, written expression has shown the most precipitous drop since 1991.

**MMAT.** Table 14 presents the MMAT scores for Westport Magnet High School (both themes) and the KCMSD for the current year (the State of Missouri MMAT scores were not available at this writing). According to the *MMAT Guide to Score Interpretation and Use* (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1990), meaningful strengths or weaknesses between groups can be assessed using the average student error of measurement of 25. This criterion suggests that Westport tenth-grade students were comparable to the district in English/language arts and math.

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**Table 1**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**

**Minority & Non-Minority Enrollment**

**September 1989 through September 1992**

| | 1989 - 1990 | | | | 1990 - 1991 | | | | 1991 - 1992 | | | | 1992 - 1993 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Min. | | Non-Min. | | Min. | | Non-Min. | | Min. | | Non-Min. | | Min. | | Non-Min. | |
| Grade | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Nine | 310 | 93% | 24 | 7% | 202 | 94% | 14 | 6% | 134 | 90% | 15 | 10% | 109 | 95% | 6 | 5% |
| Ten | 204 | 91% | 20 | 9% | 209 | 93% | 16 | 7% | 197 | 93% | 16 | 7% | 100 | 88% | 14 | 12% |
| Eleven | 118 | 87% | 18 | 13% | 176 | 96% | 8 | 4% | 175 | 94% | 11 | 6% | 145 | 94% | 9 | 6% |
| Twelve | 100 | 83% | 20 | 17% | 89 | 91% | 9 | 9% | 191 | 93% | 15 | 7% | 157 | 93% | 12 | 7% |
| Total | 732 | 90% | 82 | 10% | 676 | 93% | 47 | 7% | 697 | 92% | 57 | 8% | 511 | 93% | 41 | 7% |
| **Grand Total** | | | **814** | | | | **723** | | | | **754** | | | | **552** | |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent. Enrollment data from *September 27, 1989 Student Membership* (Research Office, 1989) the *September 26, 1990 Student Membership* (Research Office, 1990), the *September 25, 1991 Student Census Count* (Admissions Office, 1991), and the *September 30, 1992 Student Census Count* (Admissions Office, 1992).

**Table 2**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Teacher Questionnaire (N=56) Responses to Materials and Facility Use Items**
**Spring 1993**

| Statement | Response Alternatives | N[1] | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1. I have the necessary copies of the primary texts for all students in my classroom. | Yes | 37 | 66% |
| | No | 19 | 34% |
| *2. I have the necessary copies of any secondary or supplementary texts I ordered. | Yes | 39 | 74% |
| | No | 14 | 26% |
| *3. I have received the supplies I ordered for my classrooms last spring. | Yes | 30 | 57% |
| | No | 23 | 43% |
| 4. I have access to the necessary equipment and supplies I need to implement the magnet theme in the subjects I teach. | Yes | 23 | 51% |
| | No | 22 | 49% |
| 5. How satisfied have you been with the adequacy of Westport High's building in facilitating theme implementation? | Very satisfied | 9 | 16% |
| | Satisfied | 22 | 40% |
| | Dissatisfied | 17 | 31% |
| | Very dissatisfied | 7 | 13% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those teachers who expressed an opinion.

* Question was asked on teacher (N=59) survey administered in late fall, 1992.

**Table 3**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Teacher Questionnaire (N=56) Responses to Perception Items**
**Spring 1993**

| Statement | Response Alternatives | N[1] | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am able to apply information from summer staff development in my classroom. | Yes | 49 | 86% |
| | No | 8 | 14% |
| 2. In general, my students participated in enough theme-related field experiences this year. | Yes | 28 | 62% |
| | No | 17 | 38% |
| 3. How satisfied have you been with the quality of your students' field trips? | Very satisfied | 7 | 16% |
| | Satisfied | 19 | 42% |
| | Dissatisfied | 10 | 22% |
| | Very dissatisfied | 9 | 20% |
| 4. How satisfied are you with the impact Project Choice has had upon students at Westport High School. | Very satisfied | 10 | 18% |
| | Satisfied | 22 | 39% |
| | Dissatisfied | 19 | 34% |
| | Very dissatisfied | 5 | 9% |
| 5. The resource teachers have provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme. | Yes | 22 | 43% |
| | No | 29 | 57% |
| 6. The curriculum coordinators have provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme. | Yes | 21 | 44% |
| | No | 27 | 56% |
| 7. The program administrator(s) have provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme(s). | Yes | 27 | 55% |
| | No | 22 | 44% |
| 8. The vice-principals have provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme. | Yes | 37 | 77% |
| | No | 11 | 33% |
| 9. The principal has provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme. | Yes | 30 | 67% |
| | No | 15 | 33% |
| 10. There is good communication between teachers and the principal. | Yes | 25 | 49% |
| | No | 26 | 51% |
| 11. There is good communication between teachers and the vice-principals. | Yes | 43 | 84% |
| | No | 8 | 16% |
| 12. There is good communication between teachers and the program administrators. | Yes | 22 | 49% |
| | No | 23 | 51% |
| 13. There is good communication between teachers and resource teachers. | Yes | 15 | 32% |
| | No | 32 | 68% |
| 14. There is good communication between teachers and other teachers. | Yes | 37 | 76% |
| | No | 12 | 34% |
| 15. There is good communication between teachers and students. | Yes | 47 | 89% |
| | No | 6 | 11% |
| 16. There is good communication between teachers and parents. | Yes | 25 | 53% |
| | No | 22 | 47% |

**Table 3 (cont.)**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Teacher Questionnaire (N=56) Responses to Perception Items**
**Spring 1993**

| Statement | Response Alternatives | N[1] | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17. To what degree do discipline problems hinder your attempts to implement the theme? | To a great degree | 9 | 17% |
| | To a good degree | 13 | 24% |
| | To some degree | 17 | 32% |
| | Not at all | 15 | 28% |
| 18. To what degree do communication problems among faculty/staff hinder your attempts to implement the theme? | To a great degree | 11 | 21% |
| | To a good degree | 8 | 15% |
| | To some degree | 18 | 35% |
| | Not at all | 15 | 29% |
| 19. To what degree does low and/or irregular student attendance hinder your attempts to implement the theme. | To a great degree | 26 | 47% |
| | To a good degree | 15 | 27% |
| | To some degree | 12 | 22% |
| | Not at all | 2 | 4% |
| 20. To what degree during the year do your students use the radio/video broadcast facilities? | To a great degree | 3 | 6% |
| | To a good degree | 8 | 15% |
| | To some degree | 22 | 42% |
| | Not at all | 19 | 37% |
| 21. To what degree during the year do your students use the photography equipment and lab? | To a great degree | 7 | 14% |
| | To a good degree | 6 | 12% |
| | To some degree | 16 | 31% |
| | Not at all | 23 | 44% |
| 22. To what degree during the year do you have students use computers to enhance instruction in your subject area(s). | To a great degree | 12 | 22% |
| | To a good degree | 10 | 18% |
| | To some degree | 13 | 24% |
| | Not at all | 20 | 36% |
| 23. The existing magnet curriculum appears to be well coordinated and logically sequential. | Yes | 20 | 47% |
| | No | 23 | 53% |
| 24. I have been able to infuse the magnet theme into the subject(s) I have. | Yes | 51 | 98% |
| | No | 1 | 2% |
| 25. I feel professionally challenged teaching in the magnet program. | Yes | 34 | 74% |
| | No | 12 | 26% |
| 26. Westport High is doing a good job preparing students to compete for post-secondary level jobs in business/communications or to pursue advanced educational opportunities. | Yes | 16 | 41% |
| | No | 23 | 59% |
| 27. I feel physically safe teaching at Westport High. | Yes | 43 | 83% |
| | No | 9 | 17% |

**Table 3 (cont.)**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Teacher Questionnaire (N=56) Responses to Perception Items**
**Spring 1993**

| Statement | Response Alternatives | N[1] | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 28. How would you characterize your commitment to the theme? | Committed | 42 | 76% |
| | Neutral | 8 | 14% |
| | Not committed | 5 | 9% |
| | Object to theme | 0 | 0% |
| 29. Overall, what rating would you give your magnet program this year? | Excellent | 5 | 9% |
| | Good | 7 | 13% |
| | Average | 23 | 43% |
| | Fair | 10 | 19% |
| | Poor | 9 | 17% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those teachers who expressed an opinion.

* Question asked on teacher (N=59) survey administered in late fall, 1992.

**Table 4**
**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Attendance 1992-1993[1]**

| School/Theme | % Absent All or Part of Day | % Absent at Least Half Day |
|---|---|---|
| **Wednesday, September 30, 1992[2]** | | |
| Westport High BUS | 54% | 17% |
| Westport High COM | 48% | 11% |
| Paseo VPA | 37% | 8% |
| Southeast HPR | 35% | 17% |
| Southeast INS | 18% | 6% |
| VanHorn EGT | 28% | 10% |
| Lincoln College Prep | 9% | 4% |
| **Wednesday, December 16, 1992[3]** | | |
| Westport High BUS | 55% | 26% |
| Westport High COM | 41% | 19% |
| Paseo VPA | 44% | 17% |
| Southeast HPR | 42% | 21% |
| Southeast INS | 32% | 20% |
| VanHorn EGT | 34% | 15% |
| Lincoln College Prep | 17% | 4% |
| **Thursday, March 4, 1993[4]** | | |
| Westport High Bus | 44% | 21% |
| Westport High COM | 49% | 21% |
| Paseo VPA | 57% | 16% |
| Southeat HPR | 53% | 30% |
| Southeast INS | 31% | 22% |
| VanHorn EGT | 48% | 21% |
| Lincoln College Prep | 17% | 3% |
| **Tuesday, April 20, 1992[5]** | | |
| Westport High BUS | 46% | 21% |
| Westport High COM | 58% | 23% |
| Paseo VPA | 55% | 25% |
| Southeast HPR | 67% | 36% |
| Southeast INS | 49% | 33% |
| VanHorn EGT | 51% | 29% |
| Lincoln College Prep | 12% | 3% |

*Note*: Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] All attendance data from KCMSD Student Record System, a school-generated daily attendance report. Only ACTIVE enrollees were counted.

[2] Total enrollment from September, 1992 Student Census Count (Research Office, 1992).

[3] Total enrollment data from January, 1993 Student Census Count (Research Office, 1993).

[4] Total enrollment data from KCMSD Student Record System in March, 1993 and are ACTIVE enrollees.

[5] Total enrollment data from KCMSD Student Record System in April, 1993 and are ACTIVE enrollees.

**Table 5**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Observation of Theme Classes (N=779 minutes)[1]**

| Category | Minutes Observed | % of 779 Min.[1] | % of Cumulative Min.[2] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Topic | | | |
| Information Systems | 439 | 56% | 57% |
| Financial Management | 180 | 23% | 23% |
| Marketing | 80 | 10% | 10% |
| Careers | 267 | 9% | 9% |
| Multicutural Infusion | 8 | 1% | |
| Cumulative Minutes of Topic | 774 | | |
| Activity Focus | | | |
| Concept | 178 | 23% | 26% |
| Issue | 45 | 6% | 7% |
| Methods | 461 | 59% | 67% |
| Cumulative Minutes of Activity Focus | 684 | | |
| Student Activity | | | |
| Project | 64 | 8% | 4% |
| Equipment | 55 | 7% | 4% |
| Computer | 402 | 52% | 26% |
| Work sheets | 58 | 7% | 4% |
| Read Silent | 5 | 1% | <1% |
| Teacher Instruct | 589 | 76% | 38% |
| Student Listen | 159 | 20% | 10% |
| Student Question/Respond | 156 | 20% | 10% |
| Student Discuss/Critique | 0 | 0% | 0% |
| Team Skills | 45 | 6% | 3% |
| Cumulative Minutes of Student Activity | 1533 | | |
| Interruption | | | |
| Announcement | 7 | 1% | |
| Discipline | 17 | 2% | |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Percentages within each category do not sum to 100% because a topic or activity within a category may not occur, or may occur, simultaneously with another event during an observation minute. All observed events were scored during each observation minute.

[2] Sum of all minutes observed within a category. Cumulative minutes may exceed total observed minutes (e.g., 779) since events often occur simultaneously within an observation minute, and all were scored.

**Table 6**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Observation of Core Classes (N=799 minutes)[1]**

| Category | Minutes Observed | % of 799 Min. | % of Cumulative Min.[2] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Multicultural Infusion | 64 | 8% | |
| Careers | 20 | 3% | |
| Student Activity[3] | | | |
| Project | 17 | 2% | 1% |
| Equipment | 29 | 4% | 2% |
| Speak | 2 | <1% | 0% |
| Team Skills | 15 | 2% | 1% |
| Worksheets | 199 | 25% | 14% |
| Read Silent | 42 | 5% | 3% |
| Listen (outside of Teacher Instruct) | 49 | 6% | 4% |
| Teacher Instruct | 553 | 69% | 40% |
| Student Listen | 158 | 20% | 11% |
| Student Question/Respond | 275 | 34% | 20% |
| Student Discuss/Critique | 39 | 5% | 3% |
| Cumulative Minutes of Student Activity | 1378 | | |
| Interruption | | | |
| Announcement | 14 | 2% | |
| Discipline | 6 | 1% | |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Core classrooms were observed throughout the year as part of the evaluation for both the Business and the Communications themes. The data are combined here to present a composite of theme implementation in the core classrooms.

[2] Sum of all minutes of student activity observed. Cumulative minutes exceed the total observation minutes (e.g., 799) since activities often occured simultaneously within an observation minute, and all were scored.

[3] Percentages within this category exceed 100% because activities often occured simultaneously during an observation minute. All observed activities were scored during each observation minute.

**Table 7**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Physical Evidence of Theme**

| Location | Evidence Present N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Classrooms | 62 | 77% |
| Theme equipment | | 18% |
| Theme picture/posters | | 58% |
| Theme news/magazine clippings | | 26% |
| Theme photographs | | 5% |
| Theme writings | | 8% |
| Theme books | | 13% |
| Theme careers | | 16% |
| Multicultural | | 58% |
| Other Sites[1] | | |
| Theme evidence | 35 | 66% |
| Multicultural | | 49% |
| All Sites[2] | | |
| Theme evidence | 115 | 77% |
| Multicultural | | 57% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Cafeteria, hallways, and support classrooms (e.g., art, music, etc.).

[2] Classrooms, other sites, including theme rooms.

**Table 8**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Student Perceptions (N=169), Spring 1993**

| Statements | N[1] | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am glad I go to a Business Technology Magnet School. | 168 | 89% | 11% |
| 2. I like learning about Business Technology. | 168 | 89% | 11% |
| 3. Someday I would like a job that lets me use Business Technology. | 168 | 88% | 13% |
| 4. I am learning about other races and cultures. | 168 | 63% | 38% |
| 5. The students at my school get along well with each other. | 166 | 44% | 56% |
| 6. I think the students at my school are well behaved in class. | 166 | 44% | 56% |
| 7. I think student behavior problems interfere with learning in my classes. | 165 | 53% | 47% |
| 8. I feel safe: | | | |
| a. in classroms | 168 | 82% | 18% |
| b. in school restrooms. | 167 | 54% | 46% |
| c. in school halls. | 168 | 65% | 35% |
| d. in the school cafeteria. | 167 | 71% | 29% |
| e. on school grounds. | 167 | 55% | 45% |
| 9. I think my teachers care about me. | 167 | 72% | 28% |
| 10. I feel that at least one of my teachers takes a special interest in me. | 167 | 85% | 15% |
| 11. I think my principal cares about me. | 162 | 46% | 54% |
| 12. I think my counselor cares about me. | 167 | 77% | 23% |
| 13. I like most of my classes. | 168 | 82% | 18% |
| 14. I like most of my Business Technology classes. | 167 | 80% | 20% |
| 15. I have talked with my family about my plans after high school. | 169 | 75% | 25% |
| 16. I have a parent, brother, sister, or close friend who dropped out of school. | 169 | 53% | 47% |
| 17. The Business Technology theme has increased my interest in school and classes. | 166 | 52% | 48% |
| 18. I have met with counselors or teachers this year to develop a plan for my future. | 169 | 41% | 59% |
| 19. I have participated in an internship or shadowing program in business this year.[2] | 99 | 34% | 66% |
| 20. I have attended classes or assemblies in which visiting experts have spoken about business. | 167 | 68% | 32% |
| 21. Project choice has made a positive difference in my life.[3] | 98 | 89% | 11% |

**Table 8 (cont.)**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet Iligh School**
**Student Perceptions (N= 169), Spring 1993**

| Statements | N[1] | Yes | No[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22. I have had an opportunity this year to: | | | |
| a. use a computer. | 165 | 87% | 13% |
| b. explore different areas of business. | 164 | 65% | 35% |
| c. work hands-on with diverse business tools (other than computers). | 165 | 38% | 62% |
| d. develop the advanced skills needed to secure a job in a business setting. | 164 | 68% | 32% |
| e. learn about career opportunities in business. | 164 | 84% | 16% |
| 23. The followipg was MOST important in the decision to come to this school:[4] | | | |
| a. I liked the theme. | 44 | 27% | |
| b. I liked the school. | 68 | 41% | |
| c. My friends go here. | 24 | 14% | |
| d. It's near my home. | 25 | 15% | |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those students who expressed an opinion.

[2] Those programs are available only to 11th and 12th grade Business students.

[3] Only Project Choice students responded to this question.

[4] Five students (3%) indicated they were assigned to WHS by the KCMSD or their parents determined where they would attend school.

**Table 9**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Student Perceptions By Ethnicity, Spring 1993**

| Statement | Percent Responding "Yes" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Afri.-Am. (N=104) | Asian (N=28) | Hispanic (N=21) | White (N=9) |
| 1. I am glad I go to a Business Technology Magnet School. | 90% | 89% | 86% | 100% |
| 2. I like learning about Business Technology. | 91% | 89% | 81% | 89% |
| 3. Someday I would like a job that lets me use Business Technology. | 88% | 93% | 86% | 78% |
| 4. I am learning about other races and cultures. | 55% | 82% | 65% | 100% |
| 5. The students at my school get along well with each other. | 45% | 29% | 48% | 88% |
| 6. I think the students at my school are well behaved in class. | 50% | 21% | 33% | 67% |
| 7. I think student behavior problems interfere with learning in my classes. | 43% | 82% | 57% | 56% |
| 8. I feel safe: | | | | |
| a. in classroms | 80% | 71% | 95% | 100% |
| b. in school restrooms. | 58% | 18% | 62% | 88% |
| c. in school halls. | 70% | 25% | 71% | 100% |
| d. in the school cafeteria. | 75% | 39% | 81% | 100% |
| e. on school grounds. | 60% | 14% | 62% | 100% |
| 9. I think my teachers care about me. | 74% | 61% | 86% | 78% |
| 10. I feel that at least one of my teachers takes a special interest in me. | 86% | 89% | 81% | 89% |
| 11. I think my principal cares about me. | 47% | 43% | 35% | 89% |
| 12. I think my counselor cares about me. | 78% | 71% | 76% | 89% |
| 13. I like most of my classes. | 83% | 71% | 95% | 89% |
| 14. I like most of my Business Technology classes. | 78% | 79% | 86% | 88% |
| 15. I have talked with my family about my plans after high school. | 77% | 61% | 76% | 78% |
| 16. I have a parent, brother, sister, or close friend who dropped out of school. | 53% | 29% | 81% | 78% |
| 17. The Business Technology theme has increased my interest in school and classes. | 50% | 78% | 50% | 33% |
| 18. I have met with counselors or teachers this year to develop a plan for my future. | 44% | 29% | 52% | 44% |
| 19. I have participated in an internship or shadowing program in business this year.[1] | 34% | 35% | 38% | 0% |
| 20. I have attended classes or assemblies in which visiting experts have spoken about business. | 78% | 46% | 60% | 38% |
| 21. Project choice has made a positive difference in my life.[2] | 90% | 73% | 100% | 86% |

**Table 9 (cont.)**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Student Perceptions By Ethnicity, Spring 1993**

| Statement | Percent Responding "Yes" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Afri.-Am. (N=104) | Asian (N=28) | Hispanic (N=21) | White (N=9) |
| 22. I have had an opportunity this year to: | | | | |
| a. use a computer. | 91% | 78% | 91% | 100% |
| b. explore different areas of business. | 71% | 52% | 52% | 75% |
| c. work hands-on with diverse business tools (other than computers). | 38% | 52% | 30% | 25% |
| d. develop the advanced skills needed to secure a job in a busines setting. | 74% | 50% | 57% | 88% |
| e. learn about career opportunities in business. | 89% | 82% | 76% | 88% |
| 23. The following was MOST important in the decision to come to this school:[3] | | | | |
| a. I liked the theme. | 27% | 36% | 14% | 11% |
| b. I liked the school. | 39% | 46% | 43% | 67% |
| c. My friends go here. | 17% | 11% | 14% | 0% |
| d. It's near my home. | 14% | 7% | 24% | 22% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] These programs are available only to 11th and 12th grade students, so the data represent the percentages of those students who were involved in such a program this year.

[2] Only Project Choice students responded to this question: 59 African-Americans, 11 Asians, 19 Hispanics, and 7 Whites.

[3] Four percent (n=4) of African Americans and 5% (n=1) of Hispanics wrote they had been assigned to WHS by the KCMSD.

**Table 10**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Parent Perceptions Theme Choice (N=56), Spring 1993**

| Question | N[1] | % "Yes" |
|---|---|---|
| 1. If you could pick any magnet theme, which theme would you choose for your child? | | |
| BUS | 25 | 47% |
| CMP | 13 | 25% |
| COM | 5 | 9% |
| EGT | 3 | 6% |
| VPA | 2 | 4% |
| AVT, CLG, CPT, LPT, & SCM | 1 ea | 2% ea |
| 2. Which of the following were important to you when deciding to send your child to Westport High:[2] | | |
| a. liked theme. | 56 | 64% |
| b. WHS is close to home. | 56 | 54% |
| c. like the surrounding neighborhood. | 56 | 16% |
| d. Business theme was second choice, first choice not available. | 55 | 22% |
| e. child attended last year and wanted to return. | 56 | 63% |
| f. you have other children at WHS. | 56 | 20% |
| g. assigned by district as other theme choices were not available. | 56 | 9% |
| h. assigned by district as you did not apply for a theme. | 56 | 4% |
| i. like the racial mix at WHS. | 56 | 20% |
| j. Project Choice. | 56 | 45% |
| 3. If you were choosing a school for your child today, please tell me what would be important to you? Would you choose a school because:[2] | | |
| a. the school is close to home. | 56 | 64% |
| b. you like the neighborhood around the school. | 56 | 75% |
| c. you like the theme. | 56 | 91% |
| d. the school has extra-curricular activities. | 56 | 77% |
| e. there are fewer students in a classroom. | 56 | 82% |
| f. you like the racial mix at the school. | 56 | 68% |
| g. the school has electives. | 56 | 86% |
| h. the building is in good condition. | 56 | 95% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those parents who experessed an opinion.

[2] Parents could respond positively to more than one of the reasons offered.

**Table 11**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Parent Perceptions: Satisfaction with School and Theme (N=56), Spring 1993**

| Question | N[1] | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in the Business Technology theme? | 56 | 86% | 14% |
| 2. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in reading? | 56 | 82% | 18% |
| 3. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in writing? | 56 | 84% | 16% |
| 4. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in math? | 56 | 79% | 21% |
| 5. Are you satisfied with your child's teachers? | 55 | 95% | 5% |
| 6. Are you satisfied with the leadership the principal provides? | 53 | 94% | 6% |
| 7. Are the newsletters, phone calls, and notes from your child's school helpful? | 56 | 91% | 9% |
| 8. Overall, do you like Westport High School? | 56 | 93% | 7% |
| 9. Do you think the Business Technology theme has caused your child to have more interest in school classes? | 51 | 73% | 27% |
| 10. Do you believe the Business Technology theme will improve your child's chances of getting a good job? | 55 | 89% | 11% |
| 11. Do you feel your child is safe at Westport High School? | 51 | 82% | 18% |
| 12. Would you recommend Westport High School to other parents? | 54 | 94% | 6% |
| 13. Has your child spoken to you about or suggested he/she might drop out of school? | 56 | 11% | 89% |
| 14. Has the child's parent, brother, or sister dropped out of high school? | 56 | 25% | 75% |
| 15. Have you and your child actually made some concrete and specific plans for the year immediately after high school graduation? | 56 | 55% | 45% |
| 16. Do you plan to send your child to Westport Business Technology High School next year?[2] | 39 | 85% | 15% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those parents who expressed an opinion.

[2] Asked only of parents with 9th through 11th grade students.

**Table 12**

**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Parent Perceptions: Contact with School (N= 56), Spring 1993**

| Question | Response | N[1] | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Have you contacted the school this year with a concern or problem? | Yes | 19 | 34% |
| | No | 37 | 66% |
| 2. If yes to above question, were you satisfied with the way your concern was handled? | Yes | 10 | 53% |
| | No | 9 | 47% |
| 3. This year, how often have you been contacted and asked to help with a school activity? | Frequently | 9 | 16% |
| | Once or Twice | 17 | 30% |
| | Never | 30 | 54% |
| 4. During a school year, how often would you like to be asked to help with school activities? | Frequently | 21 | 38% |
| | Once or Twice | 25 | 45% |
| | Never | 10 | 18% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses report only those parents who expressed an opinion.

**Table 13**
**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Tests of Achievement and Proficency**
**Spring 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993**

| Test | 1990[1] | | | 1991 | | | 1992 | | | 1993 | | | District 1993 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade | Min. | Non-Min. | Total | Min. | Non-Min. | Total | Min. | Non-Min. | Total | Min. | Non-Min. | Total | Min. | Non-Min. | Total |
| **Reading** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nine | 30 | 41 | 30 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 24 | 55 | 28 | 36 | * | 37 | 33 | 56 | 38 |
| Ten | 35 | 63 | 36 | 33 | 41 | 34 | 34 | 42 | 35 | 32 | * | 32 | 35 | 58 | 41 |
| Eleven | 32 | 58 | 36 | 37 | 72 | 38 | 30 | 47 | 31 | 31 | 39 | 32 | 36 | 57 | 40 |
| Twelve | 32 | 60 | 34 | 31 | 67 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 29 | 54 | 30 | 34 | 56 | 38 |
| **Written Expression** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nine | 42 | 43 | 42 | 47 | 44 | 47 | 42 | 49 | 42 | 40 | * | 41 | 38 | 49 | 41 |
| Ten | 44 | 49 | 45 | 42 | 50 | 42 | 42 | 44 | 42 | 42 | * | 42 | 37 | 55 | 41 |
| Eleven | 33 | 56 | 36 | 40 | 65 | 41 | 35 | 54 | 36 | 35 | 33 | 35 | 38 | 58 | 42 |
| Twelve | 40 | 43 | 41 | 36 | 69 | 39 | 39 | 49 | 39 | 35 | * | 35 | 36 | 52 | 39 |
| **Math** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nine | 23 | 32 | 24 | 29 | 26 | 29 | 20 | 37 | 22 | 23 | * | 25 | 24 | 45 | 29 |
| Ten | 30 | 49 | 31 | 29 | 36 | 30 | 30 | 45 | 30 | 27 | 31 | 28 | 30 | 53 | 35 |
| Eleven | 27 | 58 | 31 | 31 | 55 | 31 | 27 | 51 | 29 | 31 | 38 | 31 | 34 | 55 | 39 |
| Twelve | 30 | 39 | 31 | 30 | 61 | 35 | 32 | 24 | 31 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 34 | 50 | 38 |

*Note*: Data are percentiles based on mean grade equivalent scores.

[1]The year prior to magnet theme implementation.

*Score not reported as less than four student took the test.

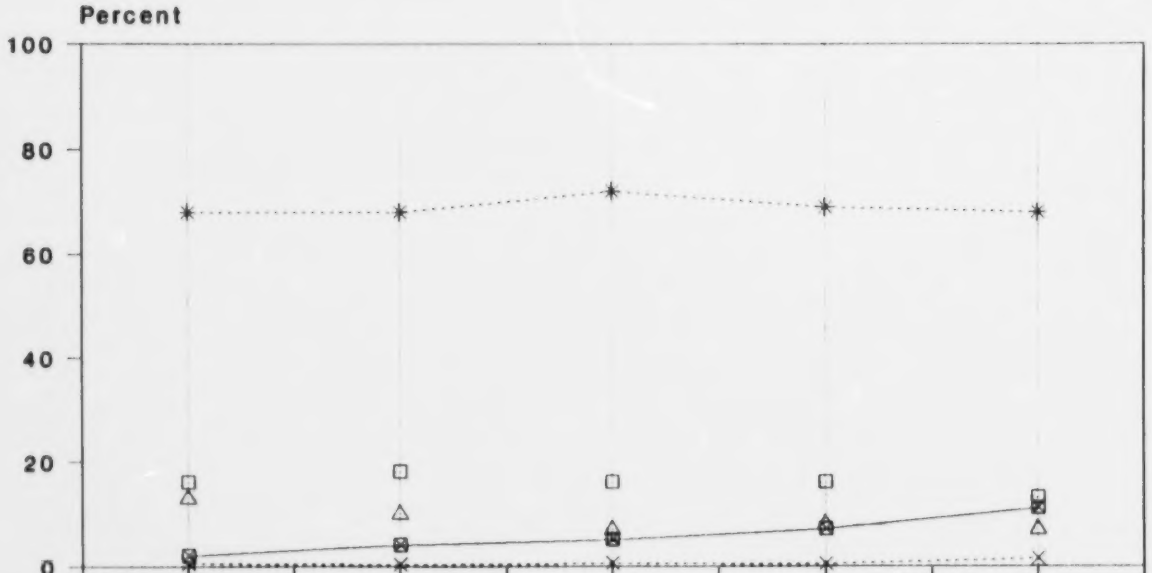
**Table 14**
**Westport Business Technology/Communications**
**Magnet High School**
**Missouri Mastery & Achievement Tests**
**Average Scale Scores**
**Grade 10, 1993**

| | English/ Language Arts | Math |
|---|---|---|
| Westport | 262 | 271 |
| District | 266 | 282 |

State scores were not available.

# Figure 1

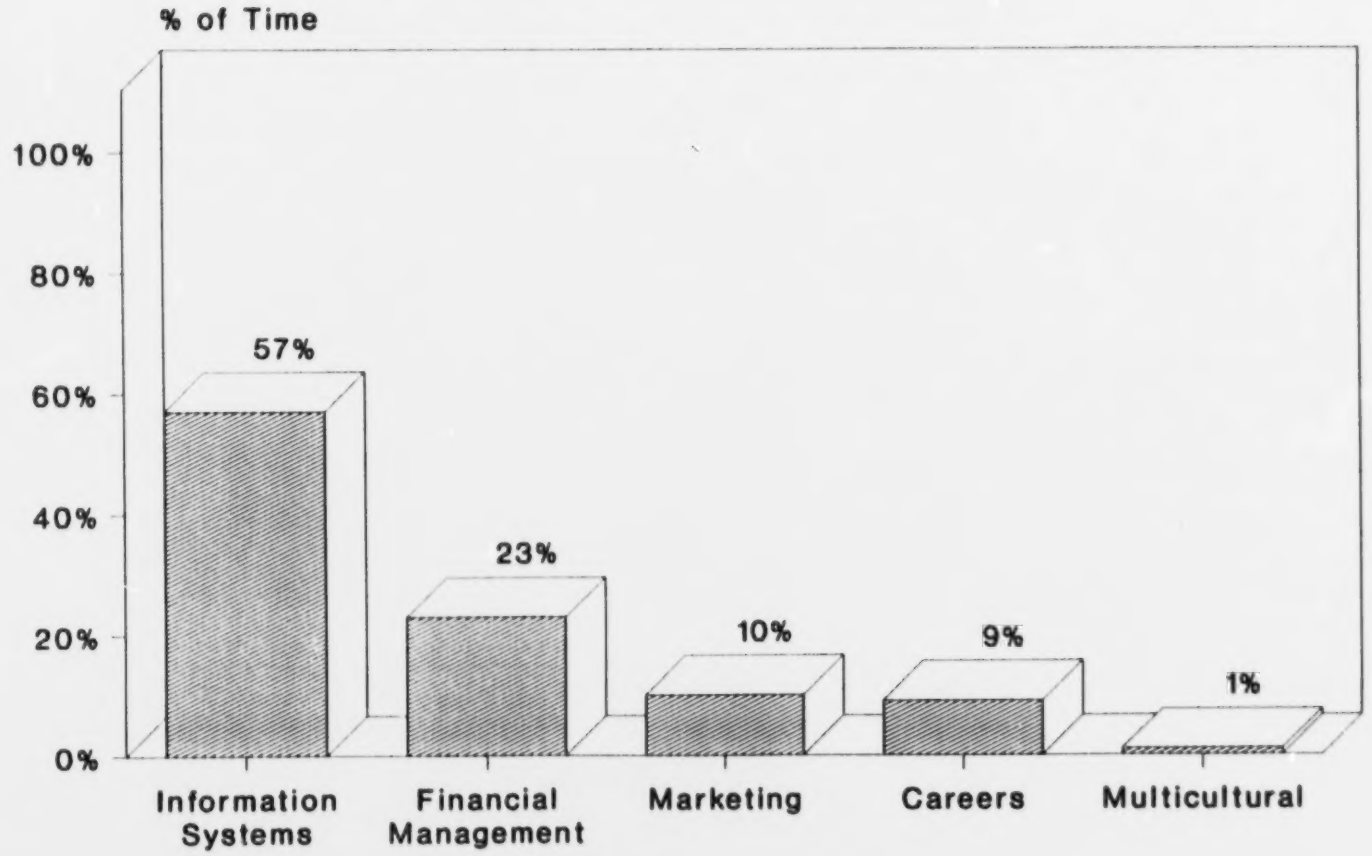
## Westport High School
## Desegregation Trends 1988-1993




| | '88-'89 | '89-'90 | '90-'91* | '91-'92 | '92-'93 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| African-American | 68 | 68 | 72 | 69 | 68 |
| Hispanic | 16 | 18 | 16 | 16 | 13 |
| Asian/Pacific Isl | 2 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 11 |
| White | 13 | 10 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| American Indian | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 1.4 |

* Westport Business Technology/Communications Magnet Theme Implemented in 1990-1991.
Data From Progress of Desegregation Annual Reports (Research Office).

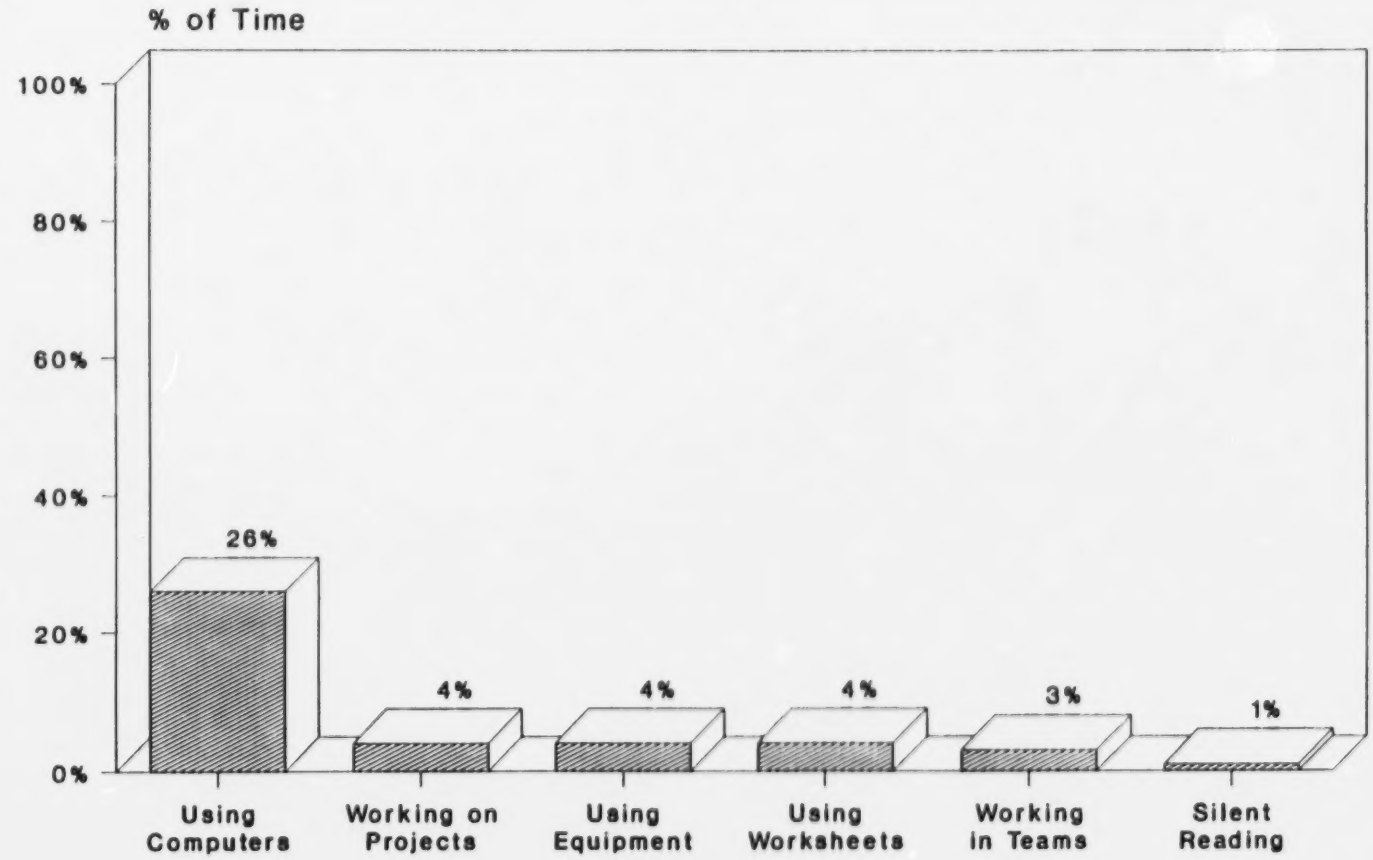
# Figure 2
## Topic Observed in Theme Classes




Topic Cumulative Observation Minutes • 774 (See Table 5).
Westport Business Technology Magnet High School, 1993

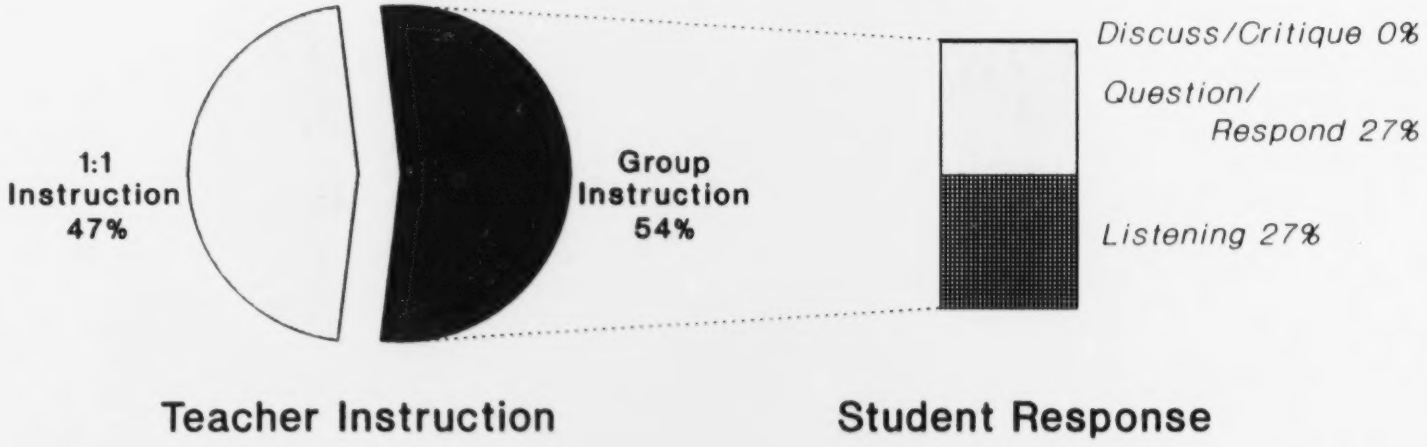
# Figure 3

## Student Activity Observed in Theme Classes




Student Activity Cumulative Observation Minutes • 1533 (See Table 5).
Westport Business Technology Magnet High School, 1993

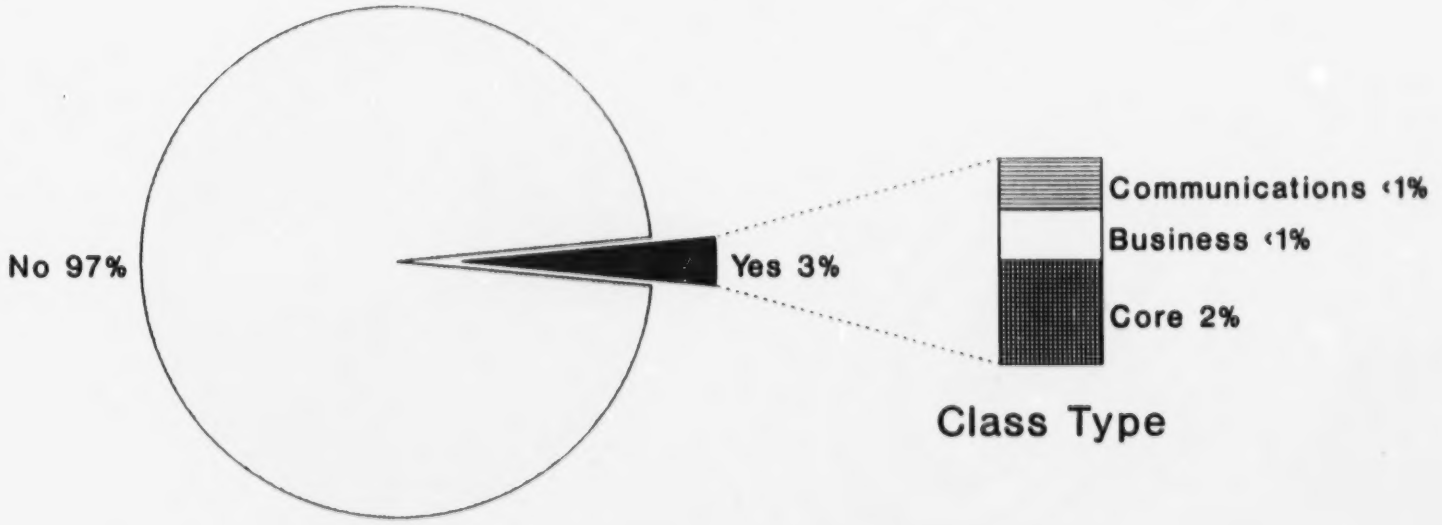
# Figure 4
## Teacher Instruction and Student Response Observed in Theme Classes




Teacher Instruction Observed 589 minutes or 38% of cumulative student activity (see Table 5).
Westport Business Technology Magnet High School, 1993

# Figure 5

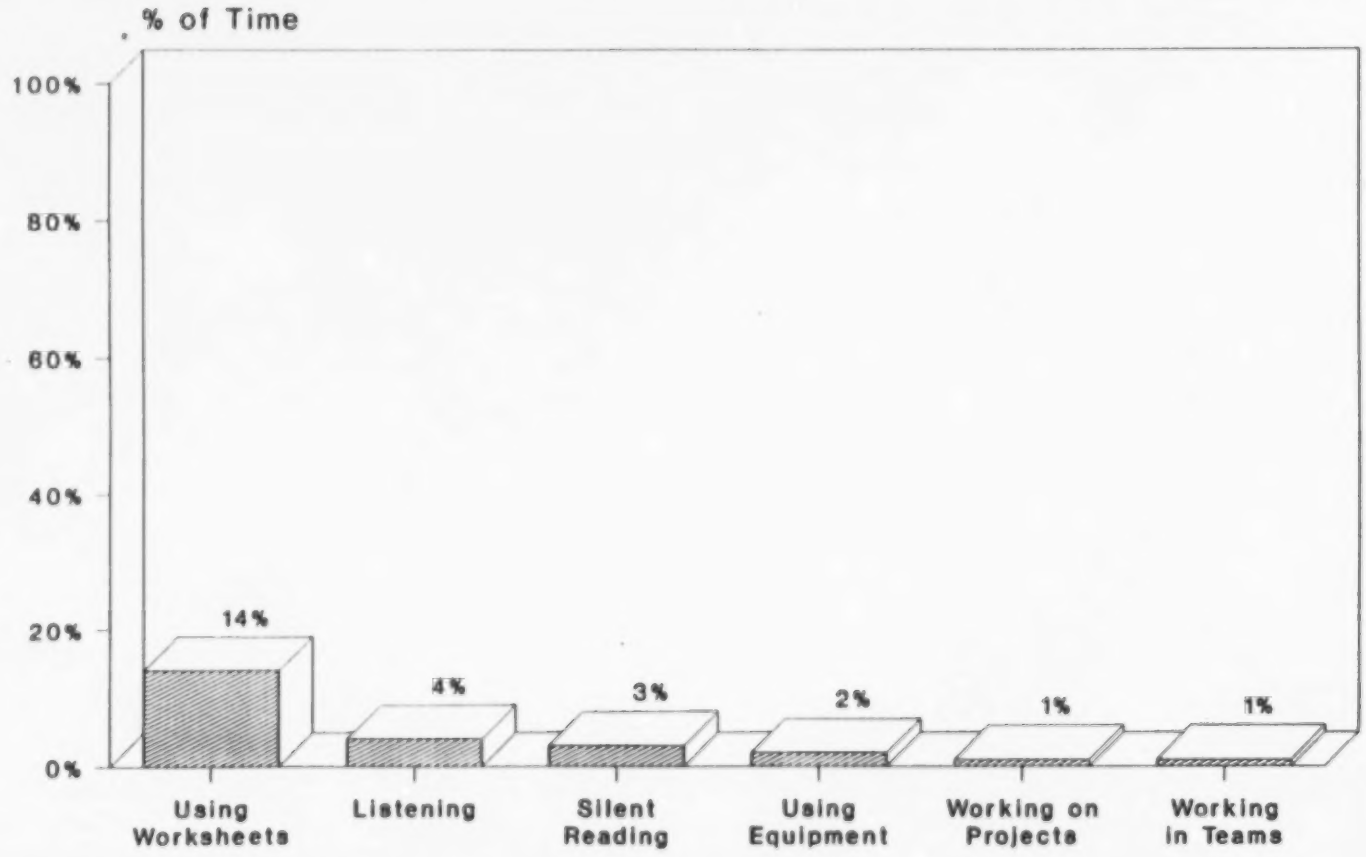
## Multicultural Infusion Observed in Business, Communications, and Core Classes




Observations in Business, Communications, and Core Classes • 2589 Minutes.
Westport Business Technology/Communications Magnet High School, 1993

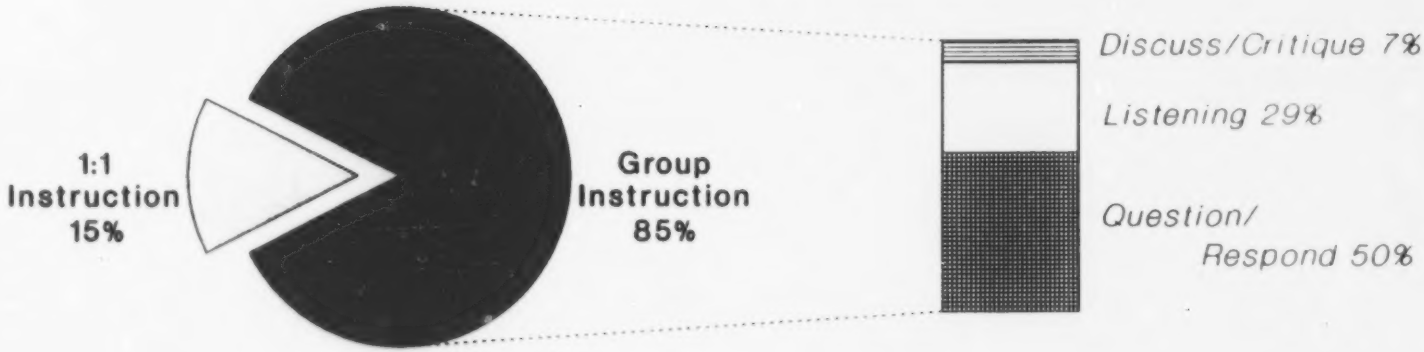
# Figure 6

## Student Activity Observed in Core Classes




Student Activity Cumulative Observation Minutes = 1378 (See Table 6).
Westport Business Technology/ Communications Magnet High School, 1993

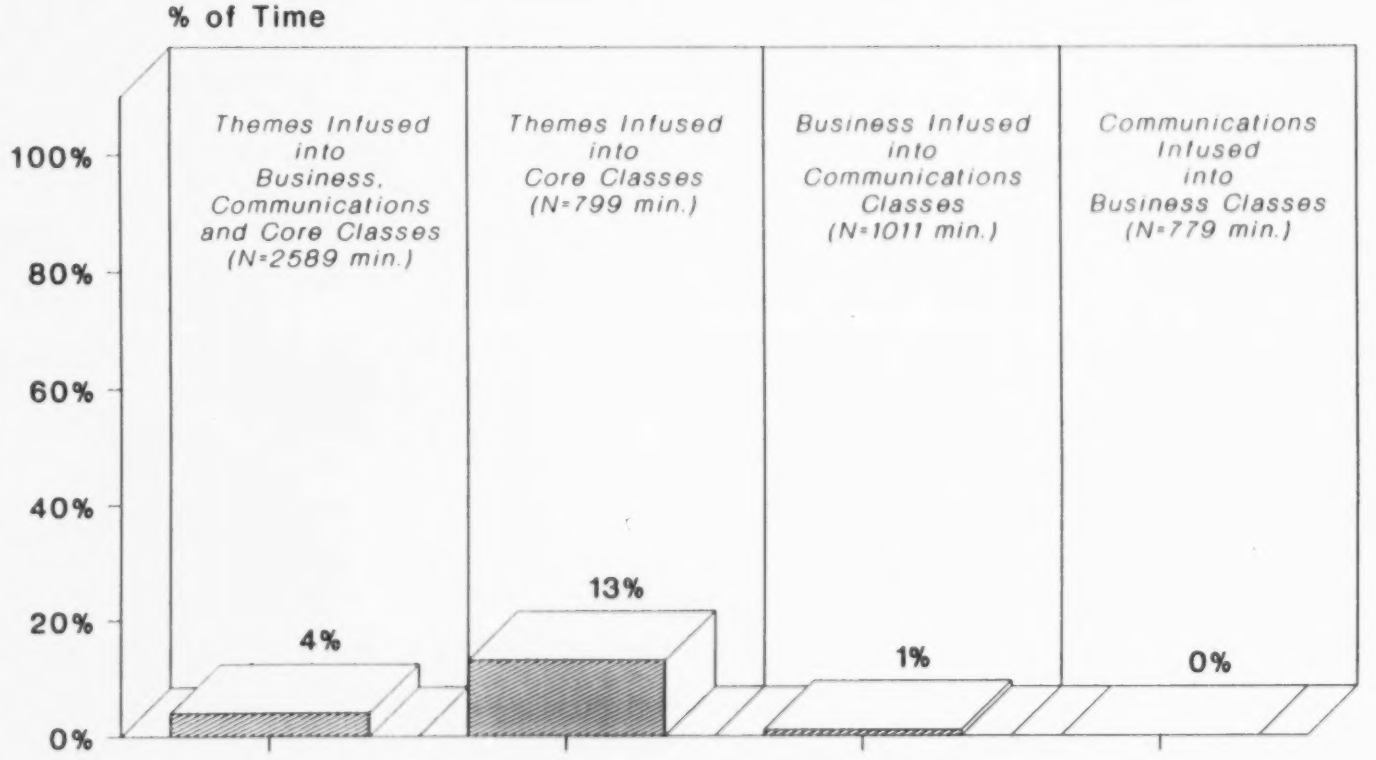
# Figure 7
## Teacher Instruction and Student Response Observed in Core Classes




Teacher Instruction Observed 553 minutes or 40% of cumulative student activity (see Table 6).
Westport Business Technology/Communications Magnet High School, 1993

# Figure 8

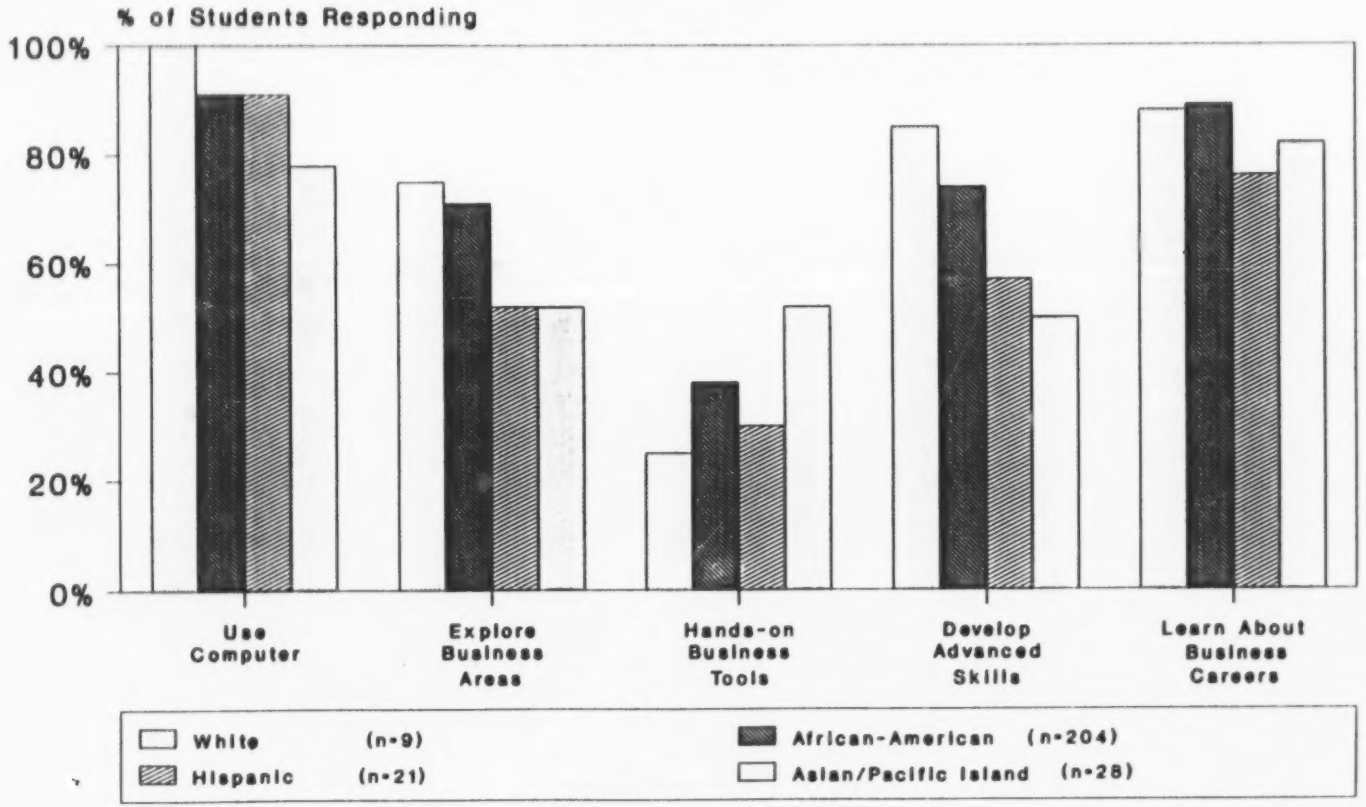
## Theme Infusion Observed in Business, Communications, and Core Classes




Westport Business Technology/Communications Magnet High School, 1993

# Figure 9

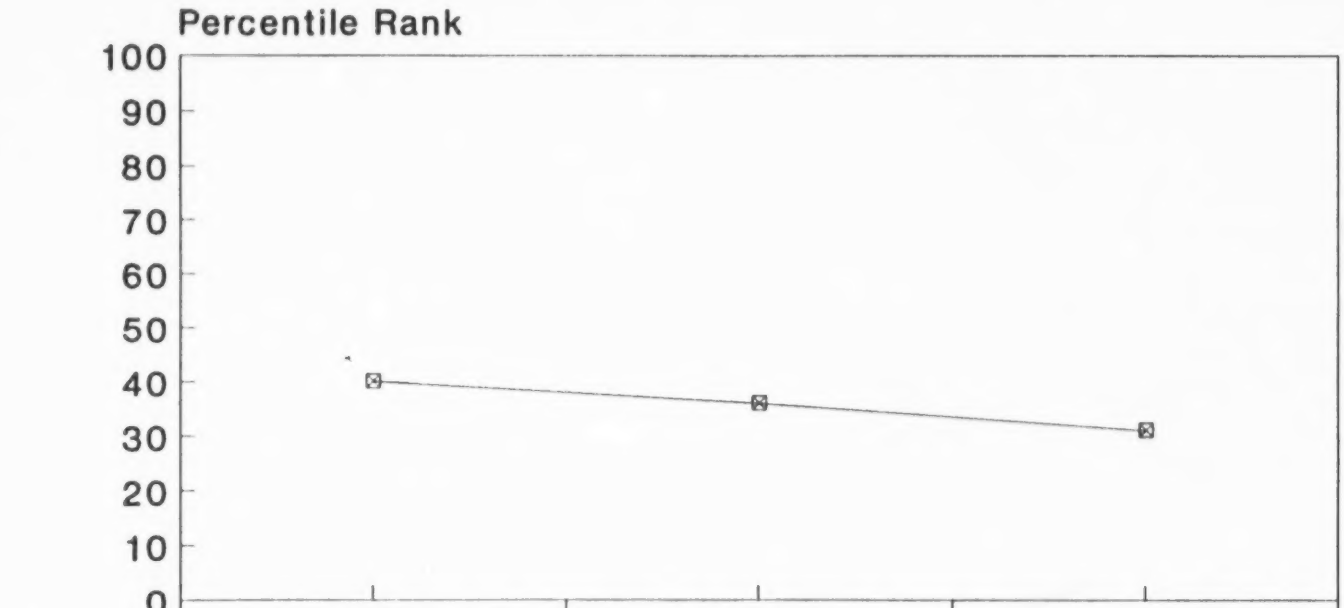
## Student Perceived Opportunities in Theme Activities




Westport Business Technology Magnet High School, 1993

# Figure 10

## TAP Reading Achievement Across Time
## 1991 Ninth Grade Cohort

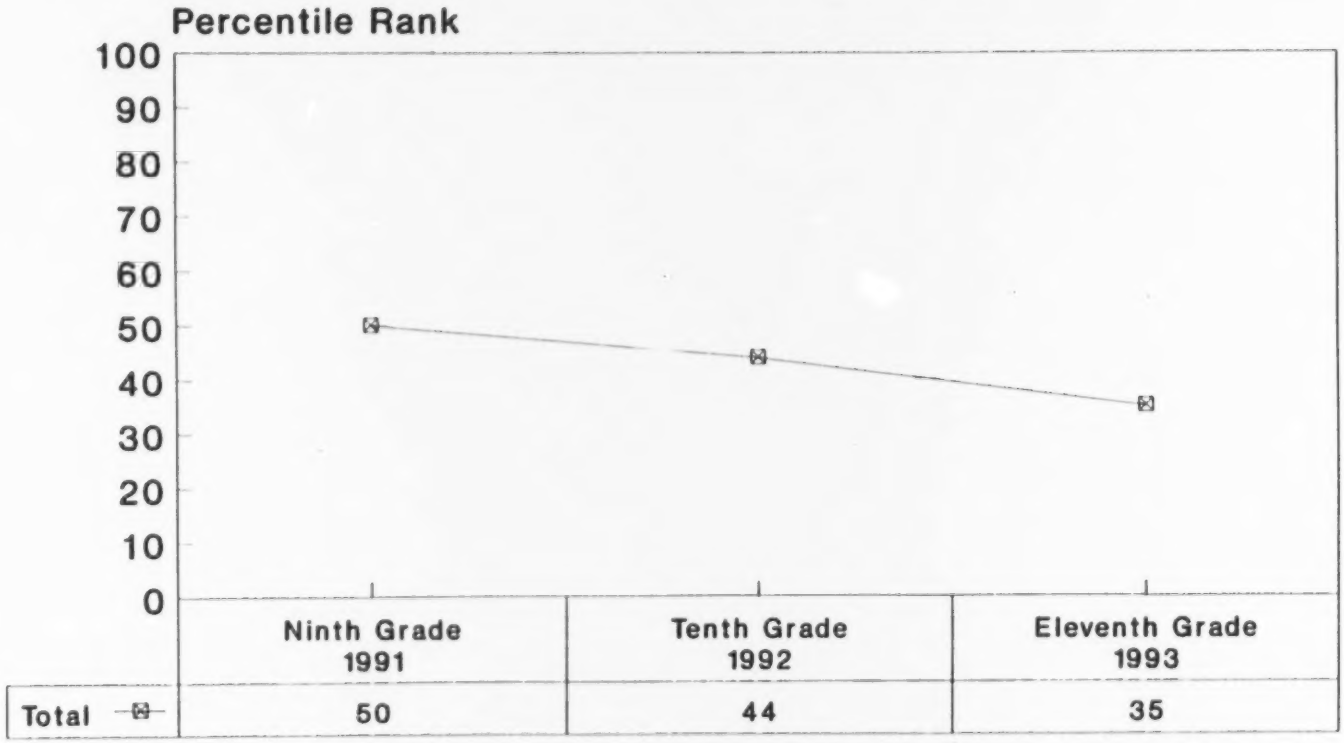



Note: Percentile ranks were converted from mean grade equivalent scores.

Westport Business Technology Magnet High School, 1993

# Figure 11

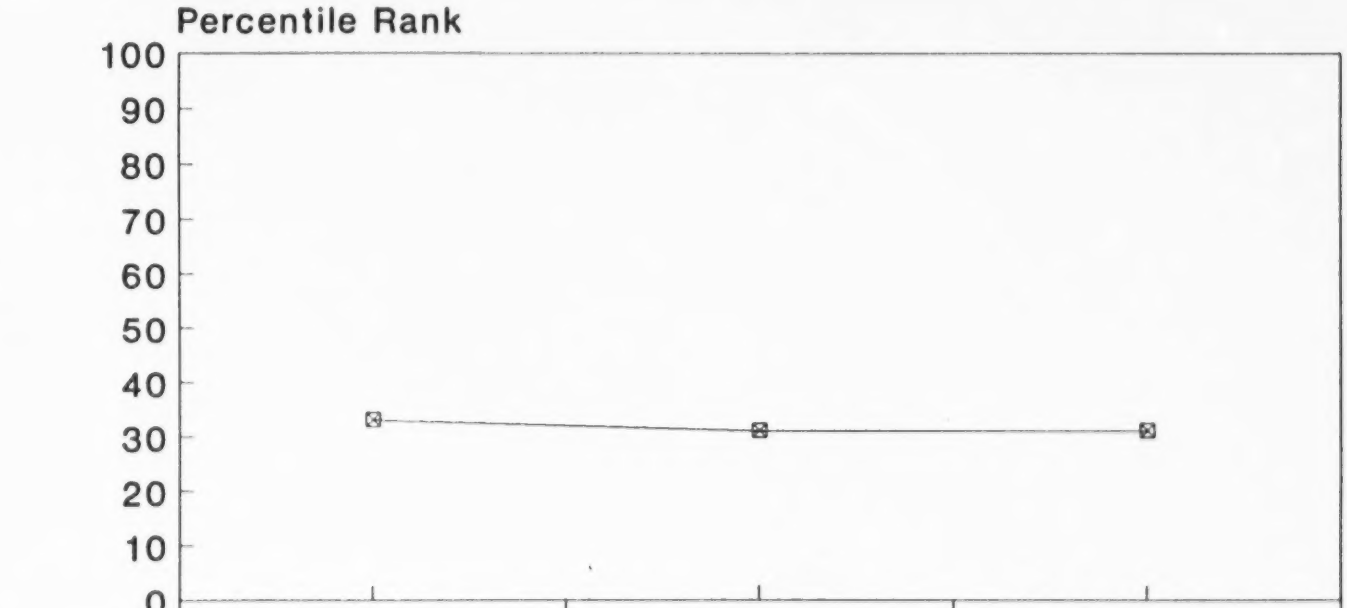
## TAP Written Expression Achievement Across Time
## 1991 Ninth Grade Cohort




Note: Percentile ranks were converted from mean grade equivalent scores.

Westport Business Technology Magnet High School, 1993

# Figure 12
## TAP Math Achievement Across Time
## 1991 Ninth Grade Cohort




Note: Percentile ranks were converted from mean grade equivalent scores.

Westport Business Technology Magnet High School, 1993

## Appendix A

Westport High School Student Dialogue

*Purpose*

As part of the ethnographic study of Westport High School (WHS) I was conducting this year, I wanted an opportunity for students to freely and openly talk to me about their school experience. During my classroom visits throughout the year, I hadn't gained the confidence of a sufficient number of students, nor a broad enough spectrum of grades and ethnicities to make me feel that I had a good idea of how students felt about school. Focus group discussions are a usual method of discourse, but I didn't want a narrow, self-selected sampling of the students as would be gained from a such a format. I wanted a sample of students of all grades and ethnic groups in an environment where they could shout, argue with me, with each other, curse, rail against anyone and everyone about school. I felt dialogues with students enrolled in History classes would provide the sample I desired since all students must take a History/American Government class every year. The hard part of making the students comfortable (or interested) enough to talk would be up to me, and the whim of the students that day. Since we were visiting a "core" classroom, rather than a theme, these students could be in either the Business Technology or the Communications theme. We made no effort to distinguish students by theme, and some seniors weren't enrolled in either magnet theme. When feelings about magnet themes arose, we noted which theme was being considered.

*Method*

Arrangements were made with the History department at WHS for us (my assistant and me) to visit certain History classes and talk with the students. Classes were chosen in order to include all grades and as broad an ethnic mix as possible. We scheduled Thursday classes (March, 1993) to get as many students as possible. About a third of students were absent every day, but more on Mondays and Fridays. Classes convened every hour (first through eighth) and included at least one class for every history teacher on staff. We spent the entire period of 55 minutes alone with each class; the teacher, as pre-planned, excused him/herself after taking attendance. The teachers had informed their classes ahead of time that we, the "magnet theme evaluators", were coming to "interview" them, so some students were expecting us. We had been in the classrooms numerous times during the year, especially my assistant, who observed weekly at WHS as part of his magnet theme evaluation duties. Also, two weeks previous, we had administered a written perception questionnaire in a random sample of English classrooms, and some students in these History classes

had participated in that survey. Thus, many of the students recognized us, or at least were aware of our role, which gave us a degree of familiarity and through that a measure of acceptance among the students.

The general topic of the dialogue was, "The Meaning of Schooling". I had a pre-planned outline of what I wanted to discover from these dialogues as they related to issues which had evolved from the ethnographic study (see attachment). After the teacher was excused (usually with an admonishment to the class to cooperate), I sat on a stool at the front of the class. I stood and moved around a lot trying to engage the class. If a stool wasn't available, I pulled a desk around to face the class. My assistant sat in a desk off to the side taking notes. We were both dressed casually in slacks and shirts; no ties, pins or jackets. I introduced us and explained why were here. I emphasized several points and responded to some immediate questions: 1. the conversations were not being tape recorded; 2. my assistant, whom they know (many nods in every class), was taking notes to ensure accurate portrayal of their feelings in a report I'm writing; 3. this was an opportunity for them to tell me how they felt, things they liked and didn't like, or wanted to change about their school; 4. yes, I would be sharing the information they provided with the principal who wouldn't know specifically where it came from; 5. yes, I will make recommendations to the principal based on recurrent complaints or desires which emerged from the days dialogues; 6. yes, the judge and "downtown" would get this report also since it will be part of my regular end-of-year evaluation reports for the two themes at WHS.

The classes were composed primarily of African-American students, but there were some Hispanic, Asian, or White students in every class. The Asian students (who were primarily Vietnamese) didn't volunteer information and I would ask them specifically how they felt. The Asian students seemed to know one another and sat in a group. Many understood some English, and there was one in every class who spoke English but not fluently. It was difficult to secure their feelings due to the language barrier, but this person (always a female) gave me their opinion as best as she could. Because of the language barrier, we captured very few feelings which I'm certain reflect the Vietnamese experience. Those feelings I'm sure of are reported.

Once the preliminaries were over and the class seemly satisfied, I opened the conversation by asking students if they liked school and if schooling was important to them. Essentially, I followed the outline of questions in the Attachment making an effort to be casual and conversational. I had the list in my hand or on the desk beside me, but referred to it only occasionally. I tried to keep the atmosphere comfortable and free both in my manner and speech. I wanted students to take charge

of the discussions, with my issues serving only as prompts. I didn't interfere with their arguments, didn't discipline them, or flinch when they cursed (sexually inappropriate language was never used during these dialogues). I tried to fuel their discussions with points I was after, but otherwise didn't intercede when students were debating/arguing among themselves. On the rare occasions students strayed too far away from schooling issues, I would bring them back. Quite often, I would reiterate what several students were saying in effort to clarify their response and to query the rest of the class, those not actively participating, as to whether they agreed or not.

At the end of every period, we asked the students to write the letter grade they would be satisfied with in their History class on a slip of paper we provided. We also asked them to give their sex and ethnicity. We emphasized we wanted the grade that they would be satisfactory, not what they would like to make (since we all want A's) nor what they thought they were going to get. We helped the Vietnamese students by finding an interpreter-student, yet not all understood the question, and we had to toss out several of their responses. We asked for the satisfactory grade as a means of providing an objective measure or standard to judge ethnic responses to the "value" questions asked during the dialogues. There is much in the literature to indicate that Asian students (including immigrants) have higher standards of academic achievement than other American ethnic groups (e.g., White, African-American and Hispanic). This is interpreted by some to suggest schooling is more valued among Asian peoples than American people. In the present sampling of students engaged in dialogue, the majority of African-American, Hispanic and White students would be satisfied with a "B", while most Asians would be satisfied with an "A."

We had sufficient time each period to address all the questions in the outline. Generally, the students were well behaved and responsive, except for the ninth-graders who didn't have much to say about schooling. We found the day exhausting, but incredibly productive. Between classes and during the half hour lunch break, my assistant and I had the opportunity to briefly discuss how it was going. We sat in the library during the lunch break (fifth hour) already tired, but exalted in our success - by mid-day we had found a distinct patterning in student perceptions about schooling.

*Results*

Providing an account of student responses to each question addressed would be cumbersome and not particularly enlightening. What is enlightening, is the pattern we found which clearly differentiated students by grade. These differences involved their feelings about schooling, the impact of the magnet theme, and preparedness for work/college after high school. Areas of similarity emerged also, and these are discussed first.

*Patterns of Similarity.* All students, regardless of grade and ethnicity, felt getting an education was important. Further, they believed school was an investment in their future. Their definitions of success varied since many offered what they wanted to be, such as a professional basketball player, pharmacist, beautician, psychologist, to name a few. Yet, common answers voiced in every class were: graduate from high school, have a family, get a good job, and go to college. The Vietnamese students defined success as doing well in school, nothing further. One Hispanic tenth-grade male was very expressive and poignant about his personal experience at Westport. Regarding success, he said sometimes there were too many people in the family so, "Success is difficult to get. Not everyone can afford college."

A strong undercurrent of racism emerged from the dialogues. African-American students in the lower grades didn't want the Vietnamese in their classes. The Vietnamese at WHS primarily were in ninth- and tenth-grade classrooms, were not fluent in English, older than the other students (often 19 years or older), and did well academically. The African-American students complained that the Vietnamese were always talking in their "Ching Ching", were talking about them, and that the teacher always worked with them and they (the African-Americans) got behind in their work.

Students described a "good" teacher as one "without an attitude." I asked what was meant by "attitude" : a teacher that interacted with them as people, valued them as people, respected and treated them as adults, and had high expectations of them (upperclassmen only). Also, a good teacher was able to interest and involve them in class. They didn't like teachers who compared students to other students.

Finally, questions about what they liked and didn't like about WHS evolved into what they would want to change about WHS. The majority of students agreed on these changes so the list of wasn't long. Topping the list and heard in every class was to open the restrooms. At WHS, only the restrooms (two for each sex) on the ground floor were open throughout most of the year. WHS had classrooms on three floors and in the basement. The principal explained to me later that she had all restrooms open the beginning of the year, but that students started tearing them up around November. According to the principal, the restrooms required extensive repair which the district was slow to fund. Other frequently mentioned changes were: more school activities, assemblies, and after school clubs; to be treated as an adult and respected by teachers.

*Patterns of Difference.* We engaged these dialogues hoping to capture a pattern of student experience which would better illuminate my ethnographic observations. We weren't concerned about quantifying students responses to schooling questions or we would have taped the dialogues.

We were after qualitative information, or a pervasive essence of student-centered experiences. We were thrilled and fortunate that a pattern emerged clearly and definitively from the dialogues. Differences in school experience sharply separated ninth-graders from every one else; tenth-graders appeared to be teetering on a fence, on one side being the ninth-graders, with their fun and games attitude while on the other the upperclassmen, committed to school but filled with anger and frustration. I can't stress enough how strong and consistent this pattern appeared. These dialogues exposed an urgent need to salvage students in the tenth-grade by focusing more attention, time and effort on ninth-graders who have little or no interest in school work. Details of the patternings by grade are presented below.

Ninth-graders (Four classes). It was very difficult to get these students to respond, except to questions about what they don't like about school. Typically, they would sit and look at me blankly, or giggle among themselves. I persisted, even resorted to baiting them at times to elicit anything, and finally got two or three to talk in every class but one. The students in that class were African-American males (about 11), except for one Hispanic female who sat alone in the far corner. In every class, I would check their response by reiteration and query those not responding to see if they agreed. I got mixed results. Yet, having found generally similar comments and attitudes in all ninth-grade classes, I am confident of the pattern described.

Ninth-grade students valued education, but absolutely did not want to work. They wanted more time between classes and shorter days, specifically Fridays off. Most classes didn't interest them, except for a few Communications classes, but they didn't have any ideas about how the classes could be improved to increase their interest. However, most weren't particularly thrilled by either theme and weren't at WHS because of a particular magnet theme. They liked lunch and gym primarily.

These students absolutely didn't want to be *made* to learn, and resisted all efforts perceived as forced learning. Their favorite teachers were those that were lenient, didn't have an "attitude" (i.e., respected them), didn't make them work, and let them do just about whatever they want. Specifically, favorite teachers didn't mind tardies and readily gave out hall passes. These students felt the education they were getting at WHS was good and sufficient to succeed in life.

Tenth-graders (Two classes, with some mixed into upper level classes). One class of about 20 students was very responsive while it was somewhat difficult to engage the students in the other. Generally, tenth-grade students talked more, had more opinions, and were more attentive than the ninth-graders. In one class, two students dominated the discussions, yet when asked directly I could

get some response from a few of the others. It was possible to get a sense of consensus in this class, because some students who didn't agree with what the few were saying would moan or groan, or something suggestive of disagreement. I would prompt those groaners to verbalize and I could usually secure their opinion, although they refused to elaborate.

Tenth-graders also valued education, but didn't really have a clear idea why. They appeared to be in a holding pattern, and not quite ready to commit themselves to anything yet, including school work. They weren't as eager as ninth-graders to do nothing but play all day; they seemed over being wild at school, but not sure of the alternative. They liked some classes and found some interesting, but they didn't like Business classes. I asked what they meant by "interesting": classes that involved them in learning, where the teacher explained things well and where they didn't just have to sit and listen to a lecture.

These students "hoped" the education they were getting at WHS was providing them the basic skills they needed to succeed (which was college and/or a good job). Yet, we got the strong sense that they weren't fully involved or committed to their education yet. Certainly they weren't worried about it at this point, but were more involved than ninth-graders.

Comparing ninth- and tenth-graders I believe tenth-graders are in limbo. Ninth-graders see school as a place to go to have fun and for many a free lunch, not a place to learn. Tenth-graders see school as a place to learn and socialize, but aren't convinced that it has any real relevance to them. Tenth-graders seemed to really want to be involved at school - it represented a large part of their social world, yet they felt alienated. They wanted classes to more interesting, teachers more attentive and helpful, school to offer them something of value and relevant. When school didn't meet their needs, many would drop out. Those that continued to come become angry, frustrated and even more alienated juniors and seniors. Tenth-graders must be salvaged - this is a critical point in high school.

Eleventh- and Twelfth-graders (Two classes, with some mixed into lower level classes). These students readily shared their thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and anger. They debated among themselves, challenged one another's position, and enthusiastically supported others. Our experience with these students was pleasurable.

At this stage in their high school career and having made it this far (and perhaps having evolved from the ninth- and tenth-grade mind-set described above), these students were mad, frustrated, and scared. They strongly believed WHS had let them down. They were not prepared for college, vocational training, or to get a good job. WHS had not provided the skills they needed and teachers

hadn't taught them what they needed. One female student did admit that it wasn't all the teacher's fault, and that she hadn't work as hard as she should have earlier on. Many students grudgingly agreed. Yet, many concurred that classes had been too easy, not demanding and teacher expectations low.

Access to and help from counselors was a large bone of contention. Some of the stories we were told were truly unsettling. Many said they weren't getting the classes they asked for; others were going to night school and Saturday school in order to graduate this year. Some students said they had been forced to take the same classes over and over - classes they had passed - because a counselor had messed up their credits. By the fact of their presence in school and the great efforts they were willing (and perhaps finally) to make to graduate, it is apparent that these students were committed to schooling. But, they were constantly frustrated by inept counselors and irrelevant coursework. Also, they had nothing good to say about the magnet themes.

These students wanted classes that were relevant; they wanted college prep classes, more interesting English classes, more college-bound teaching. As one student put it, there was a gap between what was needed and what was offered. Significantly, they felt Westport was treated like a second-class school. An example one student gave was that they were using textbooks from Central high school, a magnet school which cost $36 million to build and which had received a lot of media attention. One male student put it very well, "If you are treated like garbage, you feel like garbage." Another said, "If we use out-of-date books, we are out-of-date."

These students felt they weren't treated like adults. One male said, "They [teachers] want us to act like adults, but they don't treat us like adults." Teachers expected students to respect them, but they didn't respect students. Vietnamese students differed on this point for they said simply, "You respect teachers." African-American students felt the teacher had to earn their respect. They felt teachers talked down to them and had an "attitude." Eleventh- and twelfth-graders wanted teachers to treat them like adults, to trust them, to explain things well, to be patient, and to have higher expectations of them.

Another issue of concern was that students weren't allowed to do things at school, like social events and assemblies. Also, they were told what they can or cannot wear to prom (e.g., a female student wanted to wear a tuxedo and she was told she couldn't), and weren't allowed to wear certain clothes at school (e.g., it seems administrators and teachers mistook, according to the students, many t-shirt logos as gang-wear). Many complained about the lack of school spirit; there was more school spirit and sense of pride when they were freshmen.

They perceived no benefits of the themes. They hated Business class (Communications theme was not available yet to upperclassmen). These students weren't prepared for the skills expected of them in the Business theme classes, and typing wasn't relevant to them. Most of these students weren't at WHS because of the theme. Further, they weren't allowed into the Communications theme, and couldn't use the radio and TV facilities which they would have liked to do. Most students thought school was worse since magnet theme implementation for there were fewer activities, assemblies, freedom, and less school spirit.

Westport High School Student Dialogue Questions

**Meaning of Schooling**

**QUESTION**: How is schooling important to you?

DISCOVERY Is school an investment? Does having an education and being smart a form of status and prestige? Where does "being smart" rank with other forms of status and prestige for WHS students?

**QUESTION**: How do you define success?

DISCOVERY: What skills do these students feel they need to learn in order to be successful? and is a high school the place to acquire these skills, or can they be better attained in other forums.

**QUESTION**: Do you feel that school reflects the larger society? By that I mean, white middle-class values? That is, do you feel you are primarily learning about white American culture?

Do your teachers respect you as individuals and respond to your experiences and capabilities, or do they unfairly put you in a particular category?

DISCOVERY: Do these students feel alienated at school because of their ethnic status? Does WHS incorporate the various minority groups or are minorities encouraged to become assimilated into the dominant (white) society?

**QUESTION**: Is it useless trying to work hard in school since doing well won't ensure you a good job after graduation?

DISCOVERY: Meaning and worth of doing well in school. Do students feel they are expected to work as hard as White for fewer ultimate rewards?

**QUESTION**: What are some positive influences of WHS? What are some negative influences of WHS?

DISCOVERY: Juxtapose students perceptions of WHS to their feelings about schooling and their place in WHS captured above.

**QUESTION:** On a piece of paper, please write what would be an acceptable grade for you in this class - A, B, C, D, F? Please indicate how you characterize yourself by race and sex.

DISCOVERY: Provide an objective measure or standard to judge ethnic responses to above questions.

**Appendix B**
**Westport Business Technology Magnet High School**
**Parent Perceptions: Transportation (N=56), Spring 1993**

| Question | N[1] | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Does your child either ride a school bus or take a taxi to get to school? | 56 | 88% | 13% |
| If yes to above: | | | |
| 2. Do you believe the school bus or taxi runs on schedule? | 49 | 88% | 12% |
| 3. Do you believe the school bus or taxi takes your child to school and back in a reasonable amount of time? | 49 | 98% | 2% |
| 4. Do you believe the school bus or taxi is safe? | 48 | 88% | 12% |

*Note*: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.
[1] Responses reflect only those parents who expressed an opinion.